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MOLIÈRE BEFORE LOUIS XIV.

Photogravure from a painting by Leyendecker

Never was a comedian more fitted than Molière to please the court of such a monarch as Louis XIV. The poet is here represented as reading aloud one of his comedies in the drawing-room at Versailles, where the King, Marie Theresa and a group of courtiers are smiling at the wit and satire of the clever poet. A rival is frowning in the background, but the King himself, who was the merry monarch, as well as *le grand monarque*, seems vastly amused.

PLAYS

BY

GREEK, SPANISH, FRENCH, GERMAN
AND ENGLISH DRAMATISTS

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY
ALBERT ELLERY BERGH

REVISED EDITION

VOLUME I

THE COLONIAL PRESS
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SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

IF " 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue," a prologue to classic drama would seem equally superfluous. In this introduction, therefore, the writer will merely touch upon some of the salient features of each play, and point out various matters of incidental interest concerning the dramatists represented in this collection.

The plays presented all treat of different themes, and they have been carefully gleaned from the whole realm of dramatic literature. It is not contended that there are not other plays of equal merit that might have been selected. It is merely claimed that the plays that have been selected are all representative plays of great dramatists. Shakespeare, the greatest of all dramatists, has been omitted for the reason that his plays have been issued in innumerable editions, and are to be found in nearly every private library throughout the land. Shakespeare's dramatic method, moreover, partakes of such infinite variety that it would have been well-night impossible to determine which of his plays would best represent him. His comprehensive wisdom and his profound knowledge of human nature make him seem almost superhuman. He surpassed all his predecessors in the drawing of his characters, which range over almost every type of humanity furnishing a suitable subject for the tragic or the comic art. Indeed, he has never been approached by any of his competitors in any branch of the drama illustrated by his genius.

The three great writers of tragedy in ancient Greece were Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. To Æschylus, who led in the van of dramatic enterprise, as he did in the field of Marathon, the sanction of antiquity has ascribed unrivalled powers over the realms of astonishment and terror. He was a poet of the highest order, confident that he addressed an audience prompt to kindle at the heroic scene which he placed before

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them. We know that he composed seventy plays, and that he gained the prize for dramatic excellence thirteen times. Of the seventy plays, only seven complete tragedies are extant. His moral tone is pure, and his dramatic power, as exhibited in some parts of "Prometheus Bound," is not surpassed in point of sublimity by any of his famous successors. "Prometheus Bound" is the representation of constancy under suffering, and the triumph of subjection was never celebrated in more glorious strains.

Sophocles, who was called the "Bee of Attica" by his countrymen, entered into competition with Æschylus, and obtained the first prize. His success occasioned the veteran's retreat to Sicily, where he died, commanding that his epitaph should make mention of his share in the victory of Marathon, but should contain no allusion to his dramatic triumphs. Sophocles is considered the most skilful dramatist, and, next to Æschylus, the greatest of the Greek tragic poets. It was the object of Sophocles to move sorrow and compassion rather than to excite indignation and terror. He studied the progress of action with more attention than Æschylus. His subjects are more melancholy and less sublime than those of his predecessor, and he preferred to depict heroes in their forlorn rather than in their triumphant fortunes. He is said to have written about one hundred plays, of which only seven have come down to us. Among these seven is "Œdipus Rex," which, in subtlety of structure, is the masterpiece of the Greek drama. The horror in Œdipus, occasioned by a sudden and overwhelming reverse, is an exquisite study of the human soul, and the whole play is a terrible exhibition of the iron course of Fate.

Euripides is said to have written ninety-two dramas. The names of seventy-five of them were engraved on the pedestal of an extant statue of the dramatist. Only eighteen of these plays have reached posterity—that is, if we exclude the "Rhesus," which is of doubtful authorship. "Medea" was brought out 431 B.C. The whole interest turns upon the delineation of the furious passion of Medea, and her devices to punish those who have offended her. The scene in which she has resolved to sacrifice her innocent children for the purpose of torturing her faithless husband is one of the most affecting scenes in the annals of tragedy. Medea's alternation between jealous fury

and tearful pity, between outraged wifehood and motherly love, touches a responsive chord in human nature that has given this play a permanent place in dramatic literature. Although the ancients accorded the pre-eminence in tragedy to either Æschylus or Sophocles,—Euripides has been found more popular with posterity than either of his two great predecessors. The passion of love predominates in his plays, and he appears to have been the first Greek dramatist who paid tribute to the tender passion, a sentiment that has been made the moving cause of so many modern plays.

Aristophanes was for nearly forty years the great burlesque critic of Athenian life, political, intellectual, moral, and social. Of the fifty-four comedies which he is said to have written there are only eleven extant. In " The Knights " he uses unrestricted license of satire, and continues his attack (begun in the " Babylonians ") on the demagogue, Cleon. Demagogues were his abomination, but he exaggerated the case against Cleon, because he happened to be his enemy. Though his indecency and the offensive and indiscriminate scurrility of his satire deserve censure, Aristophanes, from the richness of his fancy, and his gayety of tone, has fully deserved the title of the " Father of Comedy." Furthermore he possessed the poetic faculty in a pronounced degree, and in his plays he occasionally introduced lyric strains of entrancing sweetness. Indeed, Aristophanes was not only a great satirist, but a great poet.

The glory of the Spanish drama reached its height in the plays of Calderon. In Calderon's best plays we see the Spanish drama in its utmost exuberance of life, and we may fully enjoy what Ticknor refers to as " its inimitable beauty, the freshness of its inventions, the charm of its style, the flowing naturalness of its dialogue, the marvellous ingenuity of its plots, the ease with which everything is at last adjusted and explained; the brilliant interest, the humor, the wit, that mark every step as we advance." " Life a Dream " is one of Calderon's most striking and original plays. It is in the nature of a philosophic drama. The theme is the self-conquest of a bad-tempered prince, and it sets forth that human free-will can conquer the most adverse influences of the stars. At the conclusion of the play the prince declares that having learned " how dreamwise human glories come and go," he wishes to make a right use of life while it

lasts—" that there be nothing after to upbraid dreamer or doer in the part he played."

If we consider Molière's object in all the numerous plays that emanated from his fertile genius we perceive a constant warfare against vice and folly. And no dramatic author, ancient or modern, launched the shafts of satire against such a variety of vanities and foibles. " The Misanthrope " is considered by most critics to be Molière's masterpiece. It has even been characterized as the ideal of classic comedy, comprising, as it does, such immortal types as Alceste, the impatient but far from cynical hero; Célimène, the coquette; Oronte, the fop; Eliante, the reasonable woman; and Arsinoë, the mischief-maker. Molière is, in the estimation of many critics, the most consummate comic dramatist of modern times. It is in the combination of character with intrigue that his genius and creative powers are seen to the greatest advantage. His plays scintillate with wit and abound in humor and frolicsome fun. They are also remarkable for their accurate character-drawing and their astonishing reproduction of humanity at large.

Racine began to write when the classical fetters were riveted upon the French stage, and he never made the effort of struggling with his chains. He was as much of a poet as the prevalent taste for artificial forms would permit. He excelled in refinement and harmony of versification, and in delineating the passion of love with truth, suavity, and charm. In " Phædra " he does not attempt the highest poetry, but the jealous frenzy of the heroine is acknowledged to be a great achievement in pure passion. The play, as a whole, is considered one of the most finished productions of the French drama. It is especially noted for excellence of construction, and artful beauty of verse.

It has been said of Goethe's " Faust " that each line is made to stand for eternity. When he had reached his eightieth year Goethe wrote of " Faust ": " The commendation which the poem has received far and near may perhaps be owing to this quality, that it permanently preserves the period of development of a human soul, which is tormented by all that it finds repellant, and made happy by all that it deserves." The first part of " Faust " was published as a complete tragedy in 1808. The second part, which is not suitable for a stage performance, was finished in 1831, but was not published till 1833. " Faust " is one of

the great classics of literature. It is founded on a popular legend, and Goethe accomplished the feat of transforming Faust from an ordinary necromancer into an eternal type of humanity. The innocence and fall of Gretchen appeal to every heart. The play throughout is fraught with interest and pathos that emanate from incidents of universal experience, while it also deals with the deepest problems that can engage the mind of man.

Schiller is excelled among the poets and dramatists of Germany only by Goethe in the power with which he expresses sublime thoughts and depicts the working of ideal passions. Apart from its splendid rhetoric, his play of "Mary Stuart" is noted for the technical skill with which its historical materials are combined. In no other play by Schiller does the story unfold itself with a movement so steadily progressive, and the catastrophe in the last act, in which Mary is led to execution, is one of profound pathos.

The wholesome, good-natured fun which Oliver Goldsmith infused into "She Stoops to Conquer" is as capable of producing a hearty laugh to-day as it was when it was first produced at Covent Garden, with fear and trembling on the part of both manager and author, on the memorable night of March 15, 1773. Indeed, with one or two exceptions, no comedy produced on the English stage has approached it in lasting popularity. In "She Stoops to Conquer" we have a splendid specimen of the comedy of intrigue, where the interest mainly depends upon a tissue of lively and farcical incidents, and where the characters form a gallery of eccentric portraits. Who that has ever read or seen the play can forget the delightful absurdities of young Marlow and Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle, and above all the side-splitting drollery of Tony Lumpkin?

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was early in the field as a dramatist. "The Rivals" was brought out at Covent Garden in January, 1775, not quite two years after the production of "She Stoops to Conquer," when Sheridan was only in his twenty-fourth year. "The Rivals" does not depend alone on the cleverness of the plot. The merits of the play include its characters and dialogue. It cannot be denied that Sheridan frequently departs from probability, and that he occasionally comes dangerously near the border-land that separates comedy from farce. The verbal misapplications of Mrs. Malaprop are in the nature of cari-

cature, but where is there a more delightful scene in English comedy than the scene in the third act between this blundering old dowager, Captain Absolute, and Lydia Languish? What could be more ludicrous than the duel scene in which Sir Lucius O'Trigger tries in vain to screw the courage of Bob Acres up to the sticking point? In regard to the dialogue it is obvious that Sheridan has committed an additional sin against probability in making his valets as witty and cultured as their masters. But, after all, the exhibition of too much wit in comedy is a fault on the right side, and "The Rivals," despite its exaggerations, is acknowledged to be a dramatic classic.

Ibsen is generally looked upon in the light of a pessimistic philosopher, but his entire mode of contemplation is moral. To Ibsen the comedy of love, for instance, does not consist in the unavoidable amatory illusion, but in the deterioration of character and the abandonment of poetic ideals. He by no means doubts the possibility of matrimonial happiness. He endeavors to demonstrate that every injury sustained is dependent on a wrong committed, and that petty, narrow human beings can only become large through suffering. "A Doll's House" made a sensational success when it was first produced, in 1879, For centuries, marriage founded upon love had been proclaimed to be a haven of bliss. Ibsen showed the seamy side of matrimony, and the picture was painfully true to life. We discern, however, in Ibsen's plays an ever-increasing glorification of woman. This is strikingly in evidence in the last scene of "A Doll's House," when Helmer declares that "no man sacrifices his honor even for one he loves," and Nora replies that "millions of women have done so."

It has been said, with some measure of truth, that Sardou's plays can hardly be classed as dramatic literature, but it has also been pointed out that Sardou "has shown real power in the creation of types, while unhesitatingly using in his plots the commonest effects," and that "he carries through a play with a *verve* and a rapidity of movement, for the sake of which he has been pardoned the frequency of his rememberings and borrowings." Sardou has been almost as prolific in the writing of plays as Scribe. He is thoroughly versed in the technique of the drama, and with a valuable knowledge of stage effect he combines an unrivalled instinct for what will suit the taste of the

playgoing public. "Les Pattes de Mouche," known on the English stage as "A Scrap of Paper," was originally produced in Paris in 1861. It is one of the most ingenious and delightful comedies of its class, and though it never goes deeper than the surface of men and things, its peculiarly original charm is none the less striking. So far as it can be said to have any social or ethical meaning it is to the effect that a young girl who fancies herself in love should avoid writing letters of a compromising nature. The real interest in the play centres in two characters—Prosper and Suzanne—who remind us in their Gallic way of Benedick and Beatrice and other well-poised lovers of that type. The episodes are often improbable, but the dialogue is brilliant and witty, and, like a clever conjuror, Sardou entertains the audience till the fall of the curtain.

In conclusion let me say that the perusal of the plays in the present collection will emphasize the fact that all great dramatists have drawn their inspiration from the complex nature of human life. The inspired dramatist, like the poet, is born, not made. He has the gift of mingling romance and reality—and of idealizing ordinary incidents with the glamour of poetic light "that never was on sea or land." He is able to fathom the mysteries of the human heart, and above all, possesses the faculty of infusing into a play that "one touch of nature" which "makes the whole world kin."

Albert Ellery Bergh

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PROMETHEUS BOUND

—

BY

ÆSCHYLUS

[*Translated into English verse by Elizabeth Barrett Browning*]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PROMETHEUS.
OCEANUS.
HERMES.
HEPHÆSTUS.
Io, daughter of Inachus.
STRENGTH and FORCE.
CHORUS of SEA NYMPHS.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

SCENE.—AT THE ROCKS

Strength and Force, Hephæstus and Prometheus.

STRENGTH.—We reach the utmost limit of the earth,
The Scythian track, the desert without man.
And now, Hephæstus, thou must needs fulfil
The mandate of our Father, and with links
Indissoluble of adamantine chains
Fasten against this beetling precipice
This guilty god. Because he filched away
Thine own bright flower, the glory of plastic fire,
And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin
It doth behove he expiate to the gods,
Learning to accept the empery of Zeus
And leave off his old trick of loving man.

HEPHÆSTUS.—O strength and Force, for you, our Zeus's will
Presents a deed for doing, no more!—but *I*,
I lack your daring, up this storm-rent chasm
To fix with violent hands a kindred god,
Howbeit necessity compels me so
That I must dare it, and our Zeus commands
With a most inevitable word. Ho, thou!
High-thoughted son of Themis who is sage!
Thee loth, I loth must rivet fast in chains
Against this rocky height unclomb by man,
Where never human voice nor face shall find
Out thee who lov'st them, and thy beauty's flower,
Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall fade away.
Night shall come up with garniture of stars
To comfort thee with shadow, and the sun

Disperse with retrickt beams the morning-frosts,
But through all changes sense of present woe
Shall vex thee sore, because with none of them
There comes a hand to free. Such fruit is plucked
From love of man! and in that thou, a god,
Didst brave the wrath of gods and give away
Undue respect to mortals, for that crime
Thou art adjudged to guard this joyless rock,
Erect, unslumbering, bending not the knee,
And many a cry and unavailing moan
To utter on the air. For Zeus is stern,
And new-made kings are cruel.

STRENGTH.— Be it so.
Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate
A god the gods hate? one too who betrayed
Thy glory unto men?

HEPHÆSTUS.— An awful thing
Is kinship joined to friendship.

STRENGTH.— Grant it be;
Is disobedience to the Father's word
A possible thing? Dost quail not more for that?

HEPHÆSTUS.—Thou, at least, art a stern one: ever bold.

STRENGTH.—Why, if I wept, it were no remedy;
And do not *thou* spend labor on the air
To bootless uses.

HEPHÆSTUS.— Cursed handicraft!
I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

STRENGTH.— Why hate
Thy craft most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills?

HEPHÆSTUS.— I would some other hand
Were here to work it!

STRENGTH.— All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods. There is none free
Except King Zeus.

HEPHÆSTUS.— I know it very well:
I argue not against it.

STRENGTH.— Why not, then,
Make haste and lock the fetters over him
Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

HEPHÆSTUS.— Here be chains.
Zeus may behold these.
STRENGTH.— Seize him: strike amain:
Strike with the hammer on each side his hands—
Rivet him to the rock.
HEPHÆSTUS.— The work is done,
And thoroughly done.
STRENGTH.— Still faster grapple him;
Wedge him in deeper: leave no inch to stir.
He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable.
HEPHÆSTUS.— Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing.
STRENGTH.— Now then, buckle me
The other securely. Let this wise one learn
He's duller than our Zeus.
HEPHÆSTUS.— Oh, none but he
Accuse me justly.
STRENGTH.— Now, straight through the chest,
Take him and bite him with the clenching tooth
Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet him.
HEPHÆSTUS.—Alas, Prometheus, what thou sufferest here
I sorrow over.
STRENGTH.— Dost thou flinch again
And breathe groans for the enemies of Zeus?
Beware lest thine own pity find thee out.
HEPHÆSTUS.—Thou dost behold a spectacle that turns
The sight o' the eyes to pity.
STRENGTH.— I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.
But lash the thongs about his sides.
HEPHÆSTUS.— So much,
I must do. Urge no farther than I must.
STRENGTH.—Ay, but I *will* urge!—and, with shout on shout,
Will hound thee at this quarry. Get thee down
And ring amain the iron round his legs.
HEPHÆSTUS.—That work was not long doing.
STRENGTH.— Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perforant gyves:
For He who rates the work has a heavy hand.

HEPHÆSTUS.—Thy speech is savage as thy shape.
STRENGTH. Be thou
Gentle and tender! but revile not me
For the firm will and the untruckling hate.
HEPHÆSTUS.—Let us go. He is netted round with chains.
STRENGTH.—Here, now, taunt on! and having spoiled the gods
Of honors, crown withal thy mortal men
Who live a whole day out. Why how could *they*
Draw off from thee one single of thy griefs?
Methinks the Dæmons gave thee a wrong name,
"Prometheus," which means Providence—because
Thou dost thyself need providence to see
Thy roll and ruin from the top of doom.
PROMETHEUS (*alone*).—O holy Æther, and swift-wingéd Winds,
And River-wells, and laughter innumerous
Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of us all,
And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on you,—
Behold me, a god, what I endure from gods!
Behold, with throe on throe,
How, wasted by this woe,
I wrestle down the myriad years of time!
Behold, how fast around me,
The new King of the happy ones sublime
Has flung the chain he forged, has shamed and bound me!
Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the coming morrow's
I cover with one groan. And where is found me
A limit to these sorrows?
And yet what word do I say? I have foreknown
Clearly all things that should be; nothing done
Comes sudden to my soul; and I must bear
What is ordained with patience, being aware
Necessity doth front the universe
With an invincible gesture. Yet this curse
Which strikes me now, I find it hard to brave
In silence or in speech. Because I gave
Honor to mortals, I have yoked my soul
To this compelling fate. Because I stole
The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles went
Over the ferrule's brim, and manward sent

Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,
That sin I expiate in this agony,
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching sky.
Ah, ah me! what a sound,
What a fragrance sweeps up from a pinion unseen
Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,
Sweeping up to this rock where the earth has her bound,
To have sight of my pangs or some guerdon obtain.
Lo, a god in the anguish, a god in the chain!
The god, Zeus hateth sore
And his gods hate again,
As many as tread on his glorified floor,
Because I loved mortals too much evermore.
Alas me! what a murmur and motion I hear,
As if birds flying near!
And the air undersings
The light stroke of their wings—
And all life that approaches I wait for in fear.

STROPHE I.

CHORUS OF SEA NYMPHS.—
Fear nothing! our troop
Floats lovingly up
With a quick-oaring stroke
Of wings steered to the rock,
Having softened the soul of our father below.
For the gales of swift-bearing have sent me a sound,
And the clank of the iron, the malleted blow,
S.note down the profound
Of my caverns of old,
And struck the red light in a blush from my brow,—
Till I sprang up unsandaled, in haste to behold,
And rushed forth on my chariot of wings manifold.
PROMETHEUS.—Alas me!—alas me!
Ye offspring of Tethys who bore at her breast
Many children, and eke of Oceanus, he
Coiling still around earth with perpetual unrest!
Behold me and see
How transfixed with the fang
Of a fetter I hang

On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world and the deep.

ANTISTROPHE I.

CHORUS.—I behold thee, Prometheus; yet now, yet now,
A terrible cloud whose rain is tears
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how
Thy body appears
Hung awaste on the rocks by infrangible chains:
For new is the Hand, new the rudder that steers
The ship of Olympus through surge and wind—
And of old things passed, no track is behind.
PROMETHEUS.—Under earth, under Hades
Where the home of the shade is,
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,
I would he had hurled me adown.
I would he had plunged me, fastened thus
In the knotted chain with the savage clang,
All into the dark where there should be none,
Neither god nor another, to laugh and see.
But now the winds sing through and shake
The hurtling chains wherein I hang,
And I, in my naked sorrows, make
Much mirth for my enemy.

STROPHE II.

CHORUS.—Nay! who of the gods hath a heart so stern
As to use thy woe for a mock and mirth?
Who would not turn more mild to learn
Thy sorrows? who of the heaven and earth
Save Zeus? But he
Right wrathfully
Bears on his sceptral soul unbent
And rules thereby the heavenly seed,
Nor will he pause till he content
His thirsty heart in a finished deed;
Or till Another shall appear,
To win by fraud, to seize by fear
The hard-to-be-captured government.

PROMETHEUS.—Yet even of *me* he shall have need,
That monarch of the blessed seed,
Of me, of me, who now am cursed
By his fetters dire,—
To wring my secret out withal
And learn by whom his sceptre shall
Be filched from him—as was, at first,
His heavenly fire.
But he never shall enchant me
With his honey-lipped persuasion;
Never, never shall he daunt me
With the oath and threat of passion
Into speaking as they want me,
Till he loose this savage chain,
And accept the expiation
Of my sorrow, in his pain.

ANTISTROPHE II.

CHORUS.—Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
And, for all thou hast borne
From the stroke of the rod,
Nought relaxest from scorn.
But thou speakest unto me
Too free and unworn;
And a terror strikes through me
And festers my soul
And I fear, in the roll
Of the storm, for thy fate
In the ship far from shore:
Since the son of Saturnus is hard in his hate
And unmoved in his heart evermore.
PROMETHEUS.—I know that Zeus is stern;
I know he metes his justice by his will;
And yet, his soul shall learn
More softness when once broken by this ill:
And curbing his unconquerable vaunt
He shall rush on in fear to meet with me
Who rush to meet with him in agony,
To issues of harmonious covenant.

CHORUS.—Remove the veil from all things and relate
The story to us—of what crime accused,
Zeus smites thee with dishonorable pangs.
Speak: if to teach us do not grieve thyself.

PROMETHEUS.—The utterance of these things is torture to me,
But so, too, is their silence; each way lies
Woe strong as fate
When gods began with wrath,
And war rose up between their starry brows,
Some choosing to cast Chronos from his throne
That Zeus might king it there, and some in haste
With opposite oaths that they would have no Zeus
To rule the gods forever—I, who brought
The counsel I thought meetest, could not move
The Titans, children of the Heaven and Earth,
What time, disdaining in their rugged souls
My subtle machinations, they assumed
It was an easy thing for force to take
The mastery of fate. My mother, then,
Who is called not only Themis but Earth too,
(Her single beauty joys in many names)
Did teach me with reiterant prophecy
What future should be, and how conquering gods
Should not prevail by strength and violence
But by guile only. When I told them so,
They would not deign to contemplate the truth
On all sides round; whereat I deemed it best
To lead my willing mother upwardly
And set my Themis face to face with Zeus
As willing to receive her. Tartarus,
With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,
Because I gave that counsel, covers up
The antique Chronos and his siding hosts,
And, by that counsel helped, the king of gods
Hath recompensed me with these bitter pangs:
For kingship wears a cancer at the heart—
Distrust in friendship. Do ye also ask
What crime it is for which he tortures me?
That shall be clear before you. When at first
He filled his father's throne, he instantly

Made various gifts of glory to the gods
And dealt the empire out. Alone of men,
Of miserable men, he took no count,
But yearned to sweep their track off from the world
And plant a newer race there. Not a god
Resisted such desire except myself.
I dared it! *I* drew mortals back to light,
From meditated ruin deep as hell!
For which wrong, I am bent down in these pangs
Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,
And I, who pitied man, am thought myself
Unworthy of pity; while I render out
Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand
That strikes me thus—a sight to shame your Zeus!

CHORUS.—Hard as thy chains and cold as all these rocks
Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart
From joining in thy woe. I yearned before
To fly this sight; and, now I gaze on it,
I sicken inwards.

PROMETHEUS.— To my friends, indeed,
I must be a sad sight.

CHORUS.— And didst thou sin
No more than so?

PROMETHEUS.— I did restrain besides
My mortals from premeditating death.

CHORUS.—How didst thou medicine the plague-fear of death?

PROMETHEUS.—I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their house.

CHORUS.—By that gift thou didst help thy mortals well.

PROMETHEUS.—I gave them also fire.

CHORUS.— And have they now,
Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?

PROMETHEUS.—They have: and shall learn by it many arts.

CHORUS.—And truly for such sins Zeus tortures thee
And will remit no anguish? Is there set
No limit before thee to thine agony?

PROMETHEUS.—No other: only what seems good to Him.

CHORUS.—And how will it seem good? what hope remains?
Seest thou not that thou hast sinned? But that thou hast sinned
It glads me not to speak of, and grieves thee:

Then let it pass from both, and seek thyself
Some outlet from distress.

PROMETHEUS.— It is in truth
An easy thing to stand aloof from pain
And lavish exhortation and advice
On one vexed sorely by it. I have known
All in prevision. By my choice, my choice,
I freely sinned—I will confess my sin—
And helping mortals, found my own despair.
I did not think indeed that I should pine
Beneath such pangs against such skyey rocks,
Doomed to this drear hill and no neighboring
Of any life: but mourn not ye for griefs
I bear to-day: hear rather, dropping down
To the plain, how other woes creep on to me,
And learn the consummation of my doom.
Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you, grieve for me
Who now am grieving; for Grief walks the earth,
And sits down at the foot of each by turns.

CHORUS.—We hear the deep clash of thy words,
Prometheus, and obey.
And I spring with a rapid foot away
From the rushing car and the holy air,
The track of birds;
And I drop to the rugged ground and there
Await the tale of thy despair.

Oceanus enters.

OCEANUS.— I reach the bourn of my weary road,
Where I may see and answer thee,
Prometheus, in thine agony.
On the back of the quick-winged bird I glode,
And I bridled him in
With the will of a god.
Behold, thy sorrow aches in me
Constrained by the force of kin.
Nay, though that tie were all undone,
For the life of none beneath the sun
Would I seek a larger benison
Than I seek for thine.

And thou shalt learn my words are truth—
That no fair parlance of the mouth
Grows falsely out of mine.
Now give me a deed to prove my faith;
For no faster friend is named in breath
Than I, Oceanus, am thine.

PROMETHEUS.—Ha! what has brought thee?
Hast thou also come
To look upon my woe? How hast thou dared
To leave the depths called after thee, the caves
Self-hewn and self-roofed with spontaneous rock,
To visit earth, the mother of my chain?
Hast come indeed to view my doom and mourn
That I should sorrow thus? Gaze on, and see
How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,—how I
The erector of the empire in his hand,
Am bent beneath that hand, in this despair.

OCEANUS.—Prometheus, I behold: and I would fain
Exhort thee, though already subtle enough,
To a better wisdom. Titan, know thyself,
And take new softness to thy manners since
A new king rules the gods. If words like these,
Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt fling abroad,
Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high,
May hear thee do it, and so, this wrath of his
Which now affects thee fiercely, shall appear
A mere child's sport at vengeance. Wretched god,
Rather dismiss the passion which thou hast,
And seek a change from grief. Perhaps I seem
To address thee with old saws and outworn sense—
Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely waits
On lips that speak too proudly: thou, meantime,
Art none the meeker, nor dost yield a jot
To evil circumstance, preparing still
To swell the account of grief with other griefs
Than what are borne. Beseech thee, use me then
For counsel: do not spurn against the pricks—
Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty
Instead of right. And now, I go from hence,
And will endeavor if a power of mine

Can break thy fetters through. For thee—be calm,
And smooth thy words from passion. Knowest thou not
Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest too much,
That where the tongue wags, ruin never lags?

PROMETHEUS.—I gratulate thee who hast shared and dared
All things with me, except their penalty.
Enough so! leave these thoughts. It cannot be
That thou shouldst move him. He may *not* be moved;
And *thou*, beware of sorrow on this road.

OCEANUS.—Ay! ever wiser for another's use
Than thine! the event, and not the prophecy,
Attests it to me. Yet where now I rush,
Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me back;
Because I glory, glory, to go hence
And win for thee deliverance from thy pangs,
As a free gift from Zeus.

PROMETHEUS.— Why there, again,
I give thee gratulation and applause.
Thou lackest no good-will. But, as for deeds,
Do nought! 'twere all done vainly; helping nought,
Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather take rest
And keep thyself from evil. If I grieve,
I do not therefore wish to multiply
The griefs of others. Verily, not so!
For still my brother's doom doth vex my soul—
My brother Atlas, standing in the west,
Shouldering the column of the heaven and earth,
A difficult burden! I have also seen,
And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,
The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,
The great war-monster of the hundred heads,
(All taken and bowed beneath the violent Hand,)
Typhon the fierce, who did resist the gods,
And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful jaws,
Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes
As if to storm the throne of Zeus. Whereat,
The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight at him,
The headlong bolt of thunder breathing flame,
And struck him downward from his eminence
Of exultation; through the very soul,

It struck him, and his strength was withered up
To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now he lies
A helpless trunk supinely, at full length
Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into
By roots of Ætna; high upon whose tops
Hephæstus sits and strikes the flashing ore.
From thence the rivers of fire shall burst away
Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,
Such passion he shall boil back in hot darts
Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,
Fallen Typhon—howsoever struck and charred
By Zeus's bolted thunder. But for thee,
Thou art not so unlearned as to need
My teaching—let thy knowledge save thyself.
I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
And wait till Zeus hath quenched his will in wrath.

OCEANUS.—Prometheus, art thou ignorant of this,
That words do medicine anger?

PROMETHEUS.— If the word
With seasonable softness touch the soul
And, where the parts are ulcerous, sear them not
By any rudeness.

OCEANUS.— With a noble aim
To dare as nobly—is there harm in *that?*
Dost thou discern it? Teach me.

PROMETHEUS.— I discern
Vain aspiration, unresultive work.

OCEANUS.—Then suffer me to bear the brunt of this!
Since it is profitable that one who is wise
Should seem not wise at all.

PROMETHEUS.— And such would seem
My very crime.

OCEANUS.— In truth thine argument
Sends me back home.

PROMETHEUS.— Lest any lament for me
Should cast thee down to hate.

OCEANUS.— The hate of him
Who sits a new king on the absolute throne?

PROMETHEUS.—Beware of him, lest thine heart grieve by him.

OCEANUS.—Thy doom, Prometheus, be my teacher!
PROMETHEUS.— Go.
Depart—beware—and keep the mind thou hast.
OCEANUS.—Thy words drive after, as I rush before.
Lo! my four-footed bird sweeps smooth and wide
The flats of air with balanced pinions, glad
To bend his knee at home in the ocean-stall.
[*Oceanus departs.*]

STROPHE I.

CHORUS.— I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
Prometheus! From my eyes too tender,
Drop after drop incessantly
The tears of my heart's pity render
My cheeks wet from their fountains free;
Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,
Whose law is taken from his breast,
Uplifts his sceptre manifest
Over the gods of old.

ANTISTROPHE I.

All the land is moaning
With a murmured plaint to-day;
All the mortal nations
Having habitations
In the holy Asia
Are a dirge entoning
For thine honor and thy brothers',
Once majestic beyond others
In the old belief,—
Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

STROPHE II.

Mourn the maids inhabitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms stand
In the battle's roar:
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Yea! Arabia's battle-crown,
And dwellers in the beetling town
Mount Caucasus sublimely nears—
An iron squadron, thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before, have I seen to remain
By invincible pain
Bound and vanquished—one Titian! 'twas Atlas, who bears
In a curse from the gods, by that strength of his own
Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his shoulders alone;
While he sighs up the stars;
And the tides of the ocean wail bursting their bars—
Murmurs still the profound,
And black Hades roars up through the chasm of the ground,
And the fountains of pure-running rivers moan low
In a pathos of woe.

PROMETHEUS.—Beseech you, think not I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn. I only gnaw my heart
With meditation, seeing myself so wronged.
For see—their honors to these new-made gods,
What other gave but I, and dealt them out
With distribution? Ay—but here I am dumb!
For here, I should repeat your knowledge to you,
If I spake aught. List rather to the deeds
I did for mortals; how, being fools before,
I made them wise and true in aim of soul.
And let me tell you—not as taunting men,
But teaching you the intention of my gifts,
How, first beholding, they beheld in vain,
And hearing, heard not, but, like shapes in dreams,
Mixed all things wildly down the tedious time,
Nor knew to build a house against the sun
With wickered sides, nor any woodcraft knew,
But lived, like silly ants, beneath the ground

In hollow caves unsunned. There, came to them
No steadfast sign of winter, nor of spring
Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full of fruit,
But blindly and lawlessly they did all things,
Until I taught them how the stars do rise
And set in mystery, and devised for them
Number, the inducer of philosophies,
The synthesis of Letters, and, beside,
The artificer of all things, Memory,
That sweet Muse-mother. I was first to yoke
The servile beasts in couples, carrying
An heirdom of man's burdens on their backs.
I joined to chariots, steeds, that love the bit
They champ at—the chief pomp of golden ease.
And none but I originated ships,
The seaman's chariots, wandering on the brine
With linen wings. And I—oh, miserable!—
Who did devise for mortals all these arts,
Have no device left now to save myself
From the woe I suffer.

CHORUS.— Most unseemly woe
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from the sense
Bewildered! like a bad leech falling sick
Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find the drugs
Required to save thyself.

PROMETHEUS.— Hearken the rest,
And marvel further, what more arts and means
I did invent,—this, greatest: if a man
Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent
Nor chrism nor liquid, but for lack of drugs
Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all
Those mixtures of emollient remedies
Whereby they might be rescued from disease.
I fixed the various rules of mantic art,
Discerned the vision from the common dream,
Instructed them in vocal auguries
Hard to interpret, and defined as plain
The wayside omens—flights of crook-clawed birds—
Showed which are, by their nature, fortunate,
And which not so, and what the food of each,

And what the hates, affections, social needs,
Of all to one another—taught what sign
Of visceral lightness, colored to a shade,
May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots
Commend the lung and liver. Burning so
The limbs encased in fat, and the long chine,
I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,
And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire,
Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now of this.
For the other helps of man hid underground,
The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
Can any dare affirm he found them out
Before me? none, I know! unless he choose
To lie in his vaunt. In one word learn the whole—
That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus.

CHORUS.—Give mortals now no inexpedient help,
Neglecting thine own sorrow. I have hope still
To see thee, breaking from the fetter here,
Stand up as strong as Zeus.

PROMETHEUS.— This ends not thus,
The oracular fate ordains. I must be bowed
By infinite woes and pangs, to escape this chain.
Necessity is stronger than mine art.

CHORUS.—Who holds the helm of that Necessity?

PROMETHEUS.—The threefold Fates and the unforgetting Furies.

CHORUS.—Is Zeus less absolute than these are?

PROMETHEUS.— Yea,
And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.

CHORUS.—What is ordained for Zeus, except to be
A king forever?

PROMETHEUS.— 'Tis too early yet
For thee to learn it: ask no more.

CHORUS.— Perhaps
Thy secret may be something holy?

PROMETHEUS.— Turn
To another matter: this, it is not time
To speak abroad, but utterly to veil
In silence. For by that same secret kept,
I 'scape this chain's dishonor and its woe.

STROPHE I.

CHORUS.— Never, oh never
May Zeus, the all-giver,
Wrestle down from his throne
In that might of his own
To antagonize mine!
Nor let me delay
As I bend on my way
Toward the gods of the shrine
Where the altar is full
Of the blood of the bull,
Near the tossing brine
Of Ocean my father.
May no sin be sped in the word that is said,
But my vow be rather
Consummated,
Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

ANTISTROPHE I.

'Tis sweet to have
Life lengthened out
With hopes proved brave
By the very doubt,
Till the spirit enfold
Those manifest joys which were foretold.
But I thrill to behold
Thee, victim doomed,
By the countless cares
And the drear despairs
Forever consumed,—
And all because thou, who art fearless now
Of Zeus above,
Didst overflow for mankind below
With a free-souled, reverent love.
Ah friend, behold and see!
What's all the beauty of humanity?
Can it be fair?
What's all the strength? is it strong?
And what hope can they bear,

These dying livers—living one day long?
Ah, seest thou not, my friend,
How feeble and slow
And like a dream, doth go
This poor blind manhood, drifted from its end?
And how no mortal wranglings can confuse
The harmony of Zeus?

Prometheus, I have learnt these things
From the sorrow in thy face.
Another song did fold its wings
Upon my lips in other days,
When round the bath and round the bed
The hymeneal chant instead
I sang for thee, and smiled—
And thou didst lead, with gifts and vows,
Hesione, my father's child,
To be thy wedded spouse.

Io enters.

Io.— What land is this? what people is here?
And who is he that writhes, I see,
In the rock-hung chain?
Now what is the crime that hath brought thee to pain?
Now what is the land—make answer free—
Which I wander through, in my wrong and fear?
Ah! ah! ah me!
The gad-fly stingeth to agony!
O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
Of earth-born Argus!—ah!—I quail
When my soul descries
That herdsman with the myriad eyes
Which seem, as he comes, one crafty eye.
Graves hide him not, though he should die,
But he doggeth me in my misery
From the roots of death, on high—on high—
And along the sands of the siding deep,
All famine-worn, he follows me,
And his waxen reed doth undersound

The waters round
And giveth a measure that giveth sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!
Where shall my weary course be done?
What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's son?
And in what have I sinned, that I should go
Thus yoked to grief by thine hand forever?
Ah! ah! dost vex me so
That I madden and shiver
Stung through with dread?
Flash the fire down to burn me!
Heave the earth up to cover me!
Plunge me in the deep, with the salt waves over me,
That the sea-beasts may be fed!
O king, do not spurn me
In my prayer!
For this wandering, everlonger, evermore,
Hath overworn me,
And I know not on what shore
I may rest from my despair.

CHORUS.—Hearest thou what the ox-horned maiden saith?
PROMETHEUS.—How could I choose but hearken what she saith,
The frenzied maiden?—Inachus's child?—
Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and now is lashed
By Herè's hate along the unending ways?

Io.— Who taught thee to articulate that name—
My father's? Speak to his child
By grief and shame defiled!
Who art thou, victim, thou who dost acclaim
Mine anguish in true words on the wide air,
And callest too by name the curse that came
From Herè unaware,
To waste and pierce me with its maddening goad?
Ah—ah—I leap
With the pang of the hungry—I bound on the road—
I am driven by my doom—
I am overcome

By the wrath of an enemy strong and deep!
Are any of those who have tasted pain,
Alas, as wretched as I?
Now tell me plain, doth aught remain
For my soul to endure beneath the sky?
Is there any help to be holpen by?
If knowledge be in thee, let it be said!
Cry aloud—cry
To the wandering, woful maid!

PROMETHEUS.—Whatever thou wouldst learn I will declare,—
No riddle upon my lips, but such straight words
As friends should use to each other when they talk.
Thou seest Prometheus, who gave mortals fire.
IO.— O common Help of all men, known of all,
O miserable Prometheus,—for what cause
Dost thou endure thus?
PROMETHEUS.— I have done with wail
For my own griefs, but lately.
IO.— Wilt thou not
Vouchsafe the boon to me?
PROMETHEUS.— Say what thou wilt,
For I vouchsafe all.
IO.— Speak then, and reveal
Who shut thee in this chasm.
PROMETHEUS.— The will of Zeus,
The hand of his Hephæstus.
IO.— And what crime
Dost expiate so?
PROMETHEUS.—Enough for thee I have told
In so much only.
IO.— Nay, but show besides
The limit of my wandering, and the time
Which yet is lacking to fulfil my grief.
PROMETHEUS.—Why, not to know were better than to know
For such as thou.
IO.— Beseech thee, blind me not
To that which I must suffer.
PROMETHEUS.— If I do,
The reason is not that I grudge a boon.

Io.— What reason, then, prevents thy speaking out?
PROMETHEUS.—No grudging; but a fear to break thine heart.
Io.— Less care for me, I pray thee. Certainty
I count for advantage.
PROMETHEUS.— Thou wilt have it so,
And therefore I must speak. Now here—
CHORUS.— Not yet.
Give half the guerdon my way. Let us learn
First, what the curse is that befell the maid,—
Her own voice telling her own wasting woes:
The sequence of that anguish shall await
The teaching of thy lips.
PROMETHEUS.— It doth behove
That thou, Maid Io, shouldst vouchsafe to these
The grace they pray—the more, because they are called
Thy father's sisters: since to open out
And mourn out grief where it is possible
To draw a tear from the audience, is a work
That pays its own price well.
Io.— I cannot choose
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you all ye ask,
In clear words—though I sob amid my speech
In speaking of the storm-curse sent from Zeus,
And of my beauty, from what height it took
Its swoop on me, poor wretch! left thus deformed
And monstrous to your eyes. For evermore
Around my virgin-chamber, wandering went
The nightly visions which entreated me
With syllabled smooth swetness.—"Blessed maid,
Why lengthen out thy maiden hours when fate
Permits the noblest spousal in the world?
When Zeus burns with the arrow of thy love
And fain would touch thy beauty?—Maiden, thou
Despise not Zeus! depart to Lerné's mead
That's green around thy father's flocks and stalls,
Until the passion of the heavenly Eye
Be quenched in sight." Such dreams did all night long
Constrain me—me, unhappy!—till I dared
To tell my father how they trod the dark
With visionary steps. Whereat he sent

His frequent heralds to the Pythian fane,
And also to Dodona, and inquired
How best, by act or speech, to please the gods.
The same returning brought back oracles
Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
Dark to interpret; but at last there came
To Inachus an answer that was clear,
Thrown straight as any bolt, and spoken out—
This—" he should drive me from my home and land,
And bid me wander to the extreme verge
Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,
Should have a thunder with a fiery eye
Leap straight from Zeus to burn up all his race
To the last root of it." By which Loxian word
Subdued, he drove me forth and shut me out,
He loth, me loth—but Zeus's violent bit
Compelled him to the deed: when instantly
My body and soul were changèd and distraught,
And, hornèd as ye see, and spurred along
By the fanged insect, with a maniac leap
I rushed on to Cenchrea's limpid stream
And Lernè's fountain-water. There, the earth-born,
The herdsman Argus, most immitigable
Of wrath, did find me out, and track me out
With countless eyes set staring at my steps:
And though an unexpected sudden doom
Drew him from life, I, curse-tormented still,
Am driven from land to land before the scourge
The gods hold o'er me. So thou hast heard the past,
And if a bitter future thou canst tell,
Speak on. I charge thee, do not flatter me
Through pity, with false words; for, in my mind,
Deceiving works more shame than torturing doth.

CHORUS.— Ah! silence here!
Nevermore, nevermore
Would I languish for
The stranger's word
To thrill in mine ear—
Nevermore for the wrong and the woe and the fear

So hard to behold,
So cruel to bear,
Piercing my soul with a double-edged sword
Of a sliding cold.
Ah Fate! ah me!
I shudder to see
This wandering maid in her agony.

PROMETHEUS.—Grief is too quick in thee and fear too full:
Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest.
CHORUS.— Speak: teach.
To those who are sad already, it seems sweet,
By clear foreknowledge to make perfect, pain.
PROMETHEUS.—The boon ye asked me first was lightly won,—
For first ye asked the story of this maid's grief
As her own lips might tell it. Now remains
To list what other sorrows she so young
Must bear from Herè. Inachus's child,
O thou! drop down thy soul my weighty words,
And measure out the landmarks which are set
To end thy wandering. Toward the orient sun
First turn thy face from mine and journey on
Along the desert flats till thou shalt come
Where Scythia's shepherd peoples dwell aloft,
Perched in wheeled wagons under woven roofs,
And twang the rapid arrow past the bow—
Approach them not; but siding in thy course
The rugged shore-rocks resonant to the sea,
Depart that country. On the left hand dwell
The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,
Of whom beware, for certes they are uncouth
And nowise bland to strangers. Reaching so
The stream Hybristes (well the *scorner* called),
Attempt no passage—it is hard to pass—
Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,
That highest of mountains, where the river leaps
The precipice in his strength. Thou must toil up
Those mountain-tops that neighbor with the stars,
And tread the south way, and draw near, at last,
The Amazonian host that hateth man,

Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close
Upon Thermodon, where the sea's rough jaw
Doth gnash at Salmydessa and provide
A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
A stepdame. They with unreluctant hand
Shall lead thee on and on, till thou arrive
Just where the ocean-gates show narrowest
On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving which,
Behoves thee swim with fortitude of soul
The strait Mæotis. Ay, and evermore
That traverse shall be famous on men's lips,
That strait, called Bosphorus, the horned-one's road,
So named because of thee, who so wilt pass
From Europe's plain to Asia's continent.
How think ye, nymphs? the king of gods appears
Impartial in ferocious deeds? Behold!
The god desirous of this mortal's love
Hath cursed her with these wanderings.
Ah, fair child,
Thou hast met a bitter groom for bridal troth!
For all thou yet hast heard can only prove
The incompleted prelude of thy doom.

Io.— Ah! ah!

PROMETHEUS.—Is't thy turn, now, to shriek and moan?
How wilt thou, when thou hast hearkened what remains?

CHORUS.—Besides the grief thou hast told can aught remain?

PROMETHEUS.—A sea—of foredoomed evil worked to storm.

Io.— What boots my life, then? why not cast myself
Down headlong from this miserable rock,
That, dashed against the flats, I may redeem
My soul from sorrow? Better once to die
Than day by day to suffer.

PROMETHEUS.— Verily,
It would be hard for thee to bear my woe
For whom it is appointed not to die.
Death frees from woe: but I before me see
In all my far prevision not a bound
To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall
From being a king.

Io.— And can it ever be
That Zeus shall fall from empire?
PROMETHEUS.— *Thou*, methinks,
Wouldst take some joy to see it.
Io.— Could I choose?
I who endure such pangs now, by that god!
PROMETHEUS.—Learn from me, therefore, that the event shall be.
Io.— By whom shall his imperial sceptred hand
Be emptied so?
PROMETHEUS.— Himself shall spoil himself,
Through his idiotic counsels.
Io.— How? declare:
Unless the word bring evil.
PROMETHEUS.— He shall wed;
And in the marriage-bond be joined to grief.
Io.— A heavenly bride—or human? Speak it out
If it be utterable.
PROMETHEUS.— Why should I say which?
It ought not to be uttered, verily.
Io.— Then
It is his wife shall tear him from his throne?
PROMETHEUS.—It is his wife shall bear a son to him,
More mighty than the father.
Io.— From this doom
Hath he no refuge?
PROMETHEUS.— None: or ere that I,
Loosed from these fetters—
Io.— Yea—but who shall loose
While Zeus is adverse?
PROMETHEUS.— One who is born of thee:
It is ordained so.
Io.— What is this thou sayest?
A son of mine shall liberate thee from woe?
PROMETHEUS.—After ten generations, count three more,
And find him in the third.
Io.— The oracle
Remains obscure.
PROMETHEUS.— And search it not, to learn
Thine own griefs from it.

Io.— Point me not to a good,
To leave me straight bereaved.
PROMETHEUS.— I am prepared
To grant thee one of two things.
Io.— But which two?
Set them before me; grant me power to choose.
PROMETHEUS.—I grant it; choose now: shall I name aloud
What griefs remain to wound thee, or what hand
Shall save me out of mine?
CHORUS.— Vouchsafe, O god,
The one grace of the twain to her who prays;
The next to me; and turn back neither prayer
Dishonor'd by denial. To herself
Recount the future wandering of her feet;
Then point me to the looser of thy chain,
Because I yearn to know him.
PROMETHEUS.— Since ye will,
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will set
No contrary against it, nor keep back
A word of all ye ask for. Io, first
To thee I must relate thy wandering course
Far winding. As I tell it, write it down
In thy soul's book of memories. When thou hast past
The refluent bound that parts two continents,
Track on the footsteps of the orient sun
In his own fire, across the roar of seas—
Fly till thou hast reached the Gorgonæan flats
Beside Cisthené. There, the Phorcides,
Three ancient maidens, live, with shape of swan,
One tooth between them, and one common eye:
On whom the sun doth never look at all
With all his rays, nor evermore the moon
When she looks through the night. Anear to whom
Are the Gorgon sisters three, enclothed with wings,
With twisted snakes for ringlets, man-abhorred:
There is no mortal gazes in their face
And gazing can breathe on. I speak of such
To guard thee from their horror. Ay, and list
Another tale of a dreadful sight; beware
The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of Zeus,

Those sharp-mouthed dogs!—and the Arimaspian host
Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting beside
The river of Pluto that runs bright with gold:
Approach them not, beseech thee! Presently
Thou'lt come to a distant land, a dusky tribe
Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,
Whence flows the river Æthiops; wind along
Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,
Just as the Nile pours from the Bybline hills
His holy and sweet wave; his course shall guide
Thine own to that triangular Nile-ground
Where, Io, is ordained for thee and thine
A lengthened exile. Have I said in this
Aught darkly or incompletely?—now repeat
The question, make the knowledge fuller! Lo,
I have more leisure than I covet, here.

CHORUS.—If thou canst tell us aught that's left untold,
Or loosely told, of her most dreary flight,
Declare it straight: but if thou hast uttered all,
Grant us that latter grace for which we prayed,
Remembering how we prayed it.

PROMETHEUS.— She has heard
The uttermost of her wandering. There it ends.
But that she may be certain not to have heard
All vainly, I will speak what she endured
Ere coming hither, and invoke the past
To prove my prescience true. And so—to leave
A multitude of words and pass at once
To the subject of thy course—when thou hadst gone
To those Molossian plains which sweep around
Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereby the fane
Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,
And, wonder past belief, where oaks do wave
Articulate adjurations—(ay, the same
Saluted thee in no perplexèd phrase
But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus
That shouldst be—there some sweetness took thy sense!)
Thou didst rush further onward, stung along
The ocean-shore, toward Rhea's mighty bay
And, tost back from it, wast tost to it again

In stormy evolution:—and, know well,
In coming time that hollow of the sea
Shall bear the name Ionian and present
A monument of Io's passage through
Unto all mortals. Be these words the signs
Of my soul's power to look beyond the veil
Of visible things. The rest, to you and her
I will declare in common audience, nymphs,
Returning thither where my speech brake off.
There is a town Canopus, built upon
The earth's fair margin at the mouth of Nile
And on the mound washed up by it; Io, there
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy perfect mind,
And only by the pressure and the touch
Of a hand not terrible; and thou to Zeus
Shalt bear a dusky son who shall be called
Thence, Epaphus, *Touched.* That son shall pluck the fruit
Of all that land wide-watered by the flow
Of Nile; but after him, when counting out
As far as the fifth full generation, then
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
To fly the proffered nuptials of their kin,
Their father's brothers. These being passion-struck,
Like falcons bearing hard on flying doves,
Shall follow, hunting at a quarry of love
They should not hunt; till envious Heaven maintain
A curse betwixt that beauty and their desire,
And Greece receive them, to be overcome
In murtherous woman-war, by fierce red hands
Kept savage by the night. For every wife
Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in blood
The sword of a double edge—(I wish indeed
As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)
One bride alone shall fail to smite to death
The head upon her pillow, touched with love,
Made impotent of purpose and impelled
To choose the lesser evil—shame on her cheeks,
Than blood-guilt on her hands: which bride shall bear

A royal race in Argos. Tedious speech
Were needed to relate particulars
Of these things; 'tis enough that from her seed
Shall spring the strong He, famous with the bow,
Whose arm shall break my fetters off. Behold,
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
Delivered to me such an oracle—
But how and when, I should be long to speak,
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain at all.

Io.— Eleleu, eleleu!
How the spasm and the pain
And the fire on the brain
Strike, burning me through!
How the sting of the curse, all aflame as it flew,
Pricks me onward again!
How my heart in its terror is spurning my breast,
And my eyes, like the wheels of a chariot, roll round!
I am whirled from my course, to the east, to the west,
In the whirlwind of frenzy all madly inwound—
And my mouth is unbridled for anguish and hate,
And my words beat in vain, in wild storms of unrest,
On the sea of my desolate fate.

[*Io rushes out.*]

STROPHE.

CHORUS.— Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he
Who first within his spirit knew
And with his tongue declared it true
That love comes best that comes unto
The equal of degree!
And that the poor and that the low
Should seek no love from those above,
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow
Of airs about their golden height,
Or proud because they see arow
Ancestral crowns of light.

ANTISTROPHE.

Oh, never, never may ye, Fates,
Behold me with your awful eyes

Lift mine too fondly up the skies
Where Zeus upon the purple waits!
Nor let me step too near—too near
To any suitor, bright from heaven:
Because I see, because I fear
This loveless maiden vexed and sad
By this fell curse of Herè, driven
On wanderings dread and drear.

EPODE.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
Of nuptial love, to bind me by!
It will not hurt, I shall not dread
To meet it in reply.
But let not love from those above
Revert and fix me, as I said,
With that inevitable Eye!
I have no sword to fight that fight,
I have no strength to tread that path,
I know not if my nature hath
The power to bear, I cannot see
Whither from Zeus's infinite
I have the power to flee.

PROMETHEUS.—Yet Zeus, albeit most absolute of will,
Shall turn to meekness—such a marriage-rite
He holds in preparation, which anon
Shall thrust him headlong from his gerent seat
Adown the abysmal void, and so the curse
His father Chronos muttered in his fall,
As he fell from his ancient throne and cursed,
Shall be accomplished wholly. No escape
From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus
Find granted to him from any of his gods,
Unless I teach him. I the refuge know,
And I, the means. Now, therefore, let him sit
And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith
On his supernal noises, hurtling on
With restless hand the bolt that breathes out fire;
For these things shall not help him, none of them,
Nor hinder his perdition when he falls

To shame, and lower than patience: such a foe
He doth himself prepare against himself,
A wonder of unconquerable hate,
An organizer of sublimer fire
Than glares in lightnings, and of grander sound
Than aught the thunder rolls, out-thundering it,
With power to shatter in Poseidon's fist
The trident-spear which, while it plagues the sea,
Doth shake the shores around it. Ay, and Zeus,
Precipitated thus, shall learn at length
The difference betwixt rule and servitude.

CHORUS.—Thou makest threats for Zeus of thy desires.

PROMETHEUS.—I tell you, all these things shall be fulfilled.
Even so as I desire them.

CHORUS.— Must we then
Look out for one shall come to master Zeus?

PROMETHEUS.—These chains weigh lighter than his sorrows shall.

CHORUS.—How art thou not afraid to utter such words?

PROMETHEUS.—What should *I* fear who cannot die?

CHORUS.— But *he*
Can visit thee with dreader woe than death's.

PROMETHEUS.—Why, let him do it! I am here, prepared
For all things and their pangs.

CHORUS.— The wise are they
Who reverence Adrasteia.

PROMETHEUS.— Reverence thou,
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,
Whenever reigning! but for me, your Zeus
Is less than nothing. Let him act and reign
His brief hour out according to his will—
He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long.
But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,
That new-made menial of the new-crowned king:
He doubtless comes to announce to us something new.

Hermes enters.

HERMES.—I speak to thee, the sophist, the talker-down
Of scorn by scorn, the sinner against gods,
The reverencer of men, the thief of fire—

I speak to thee and adjure thee! Zeus requires
Thy declaration of what marriage-rite
Thus moves thy vaunt and shall hereafter cause
His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy speech
In riddles, but speak clearly! Never cast
Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet,
Since Zeus, thou mayst perceive, is scarcely won
To mercy by such means.

PROMETHEUS.— A speech well-mouthed
In the utterance, and full-minded in the sense,
As doth befit a servant of the gods!
New gods, ye newly reign, and think forsooth
Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart
To carry a wound there!—have I not stood by
While two kings fell from thence? and shall I not
Behold the third, the same who rules you now,
Fall, shamed to sudden ruin?—Do I seem
To tremble and quail before your modern gods?
Far be it from me!—For thyself, depart,
Retread thy steps in haste. To all thou hast asked
I answer nothing.

HERMES.— Such a wind of pride
Impelled thee of yore full-sail upon these rocks.

PROMETHEUS.—I would not barter—learn thou soothly that!—
My suffering for thy service. I maintain
It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks
Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus.
Thus upon scorners I retort their scorn.

HERMES.—It seems that thou dost glory in thy despair.

PROMETHEUS.—I glory? would my foes did glory so,
And I stood by to see them!—naming whom,
Thou are not unremembered.

HERMES.— Dost thou charge
Me also with the blame of thy mischance?

PROMETHEUS.—I tell thee I loathe the universal gods,
Who for the good I gave them rendered back
The ill of their injustice.

HERMES.— Thou art mad—
Thou are raving, Titan, at the fever-height.

PROMETHEUS.—If it be madness to abhor my foes,
May I be mad!
HERMES.— If thou wert prosperous
Thou wouldst be unendurable.
PROMETHEUS.— Alas!
HERMES.—Zeus knows not that word.
PROMETHEUS.— But maturing Time
Teaches all things.
HERMES.—Howbeit, thou hast not learnt
The wisdom yet, thou needest.
PROMETHEUS.— If I had,
I should not talk thus with a slave like thee.
HERMES.—No answer thou vouchsafest, I believe,
To the great Sire's requirement.
PROMETHEUS.— Verily
I owe him grateful service—and should pay it.
HERMES.—Why, thou dost mock me, Titan, as I stood
A child before thy face.
PROMETHEUS.— No child, forsooth,
But yet more foolish than a foolish child,
If thou expect that I should answer aught
Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand
Nor any machination in the world
Shall force mine utterance ere he loose, himself,
These cankerous fetters from me. For the rest,
Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,
And with his white-winged snows and mutterings deep
Of subterranean thunders mix all things,
Confound them in disorder. None of this
Shall bend my sturdy will and make me speak
The name of his dethroner who shall come.
HERMES.—Can this avail thee? Look to it!
PROMETHEUS.— Long ago
It was looked forward to, precounselled of.
HERMES.—Vain god, take righteous courage! dare for once
To apprehend and front thine agonies
With a just prudence.
PROMETHEUS.— Vainly dost thou chafe
My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea
Goes beating on the rock. Oh, think no more

That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's mind,
Will supplicate him, loathèd as he is,
With feminine upliftings of my hands,
To break these chains. Far from me be the thought!

HERMES.—I have indeed, methinks, said much in vain,
For still thy heart beneath my showers of prayers
Lies dry and hard—nay, leaps like a young horse
Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,
And tugs and struggles against the new-tried rein—
Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all,
Which sophism is; since absolute will disjoined
From perfect mind is worse than weak. Behold,
Unless my words persuade thee, what a blast
And whirlwind of inevitable woe
Must sweep persuasion through thee! For at first
The Father will split up this jut of rock
With the great thunder and the bolted flame
And hide thy body where a hinge of stone
Shall catch it like an arm; and when thou hast passed
A long black time within, thou shalt come out
To front the sun while Zeus's winged hound,
The strong carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down
To meet thee, self-called to a daily feast,
And set his fierce beak in thee and tear off
The long rags of thy flesh and batten deep
Upon thy dusky liver. Do not look
For any end moreover to this curse
Or ere some god appear, to accept thy pangs
On his own head vicarious, and descend
With unreluctant step the darks of hell
And gloomy abysses around Tartarus.
Then ponder this—this threat is not a growth
Of vain invention; it is spoken and meant;
King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,
Consummating the utterance by the act;
So, look to it, thou! take heed, and nevermore
Forget good counsel, to indulge self-will.

CHORUS.—Our Hermes suits his reasons to the times;
At least I think so, since he bids thee drop

Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to him!
When the wise err, their wisdom makes their shame.

PROMETHEUS.—Unto me the foreknower, this mandate of power
He cries, to reveal it.
What's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate
At the hour that I feel it?
Let the locks of the lightning, all bristling and whitening,
Flash, çoiling me round,
While the æther goes surging 'neath thunder and scourging
Of wild winds unbound!
Let the blast of the firmament whirl from its place
The earth rooted below,
And the brine of the ocean, in rapid emotion,
Be driven in the face
Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk to and fro!
Let him hurl me anon into Tartarus—on—
To the blackest degree,
With Necessity's vortices strangling me down;
But he cannot join death to a fate meant for *me!*

HERMES.—Why, the words that he speaks and the thoughts that he thinks
Are maniacal!—add,
If the Fate who hath bound him should loose not the links,
He were utterly mad.
Then depart ye who groan with him,
Leaving to moan with him—
Go in haste! lest the roar of the thunder anearing
Should blast you to idiocy, living and hearing.

CHORUS.—Change thy speech for another, thy thought for a new,
If to move me and teach me indeed be thy care!
For thy words swerve so far from the loyal and true
That the thunder of Zeus seems more easy to bear.
How! couldst teach me to venture such vileness? behold!
I *choose,* with this victim, this anguish foretold!
I recoil from the traitor in hate and disdain,

And I know that the curse of the treason is worse
Than the pang of the chain.

HERMES.—Then remember, O nymphs, what I tell you before,
Nor, when pierced by the arrows that Até will throw you,
Cast blame on your fate and declare evermore
That Zeus thrust you on anguish he did not foreshow you.
Nay, verily, nay! for ye perish anon
For your deed—by your choice. By no blindness of doubt,
No abruptness of doom, but by madness alone,
In the great net of Até, whence none cometh out,
Ye are wound and undone.

PROMETHEUS.—Ay! in act now, in word now no more,
Earth is rocking in space.
And the thunders crash up with a roar upon roar,
And the eddying lightnings flash fire in my face,
And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and round,
And the blasts of the winds universal leap free
And blow each upon each with a passion of sound,
And æther goes mingling in storm with the sea.
Such a curse on my head, in a manifest dread,
From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along.
O my mother's fair glory! O Æther, enringing
All eyes with the sweet common light of thy bringing!
Dost see how I suffer this wrong?

ŒDIPUS REX

—

BY

SOPHOCLES

[*Metrical Translation by E. H. Plumptre*]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ŒDIPUS, King of Thebes.
CREON, brother of Jocasta.
TEIRESIAS, a soothsayer.
PRIEST of Zeus.
MESSENGER from Corinth.
SHEPHERD.
SECOND MESSENGER.
JOCASTA, wife of Œdipus.
ANTIGONE and ISMENE, children of Œdipus.
Chorus of Priests and Suppliants.
Chorus of Theban Citizens.

ŒDIPUS REX

SCENE.—THEBES

In the background, the palace of Œdipus; in front, the altar of Zeus, priests and boys round it in the attitude of suppliants.

Enter Œdipus.

ŒDIPUS.—Why sit ye here, my children, youngest brood
Of Cadmos famed of old, in solemn state,
Your hands thus wreathèd with the suppliants' boughs?
And all the city reeks with incense smoke,
And all re-echoes with your hymns and groans;
And I, my children, counting it unmeet
To hear report from others, I have come
Myself, whom all name Œdipus the Great.
Do thou, then, agèd Sire, since thine the right
To speak for these, tell clearly how ye stand,
In terror or submission; speak to me
As willing helper. Heartless should I be
To see you prostrate thus, and feel no ruth.

PRIEST.—Yea, Œdipus, thou ruler of my land,
Thou seest our age, who sit as suppliants, bowed
Around thine altars; some as yet too weak
For distant flight, and some weighed down with age,
Priest, I, of Zeus, and these the chosen youth:
And in the market-places of the town
The people sit and wail, with wreath in hand,
By the two shrines of Pallas,[1] or the grave,
Where still the seer Ismenos prophesies.

[1] Probably, as at Athens Athena had two temples as Polias and Parthenos, so also at Thebes there were two shrines dedicated to her under different names, as Onkæa and Ismenia.

For this our city, as thine eyes may see,
Is sorely tempest-tossed, nor lifts its head
From out the surging sea of blood-flecked waves,
All smitten in the ripening blooms of earth,
All smitten in the herds that graze the fields,
Yea, and in timeless births of woman's fruit;
And still the God, fire-darting Pestilence,
As deadliest foe, upon our city swoops,
And desolates the home where Cadmos dwelt,
And Hades dark grows rich in sighs and groans.
It is not that we deem of thee as one
Equalled with gods in power, that we sit here,
These little ones and I, as suppliants prone;
But, judging thee, in all life's shifting scenes,
Chiefest of men, yea, and of chiefest skill
In communings with Heaven. For thou didst come
And freed'st this city, named of Cadmos old,
From the sad tribute which of yore we paid
To that stern songstress,[2] all untaught of us,
And all unprompted; but by gift of God,
Men think and say, thou didst our life upraise.
And now, dear Œdipus, most honored lord,
We pray thee, we thy suppliants, find for us
Some succor, whether voice of any God,
Or any man brings knowledge to thy soul;
For still I see, with those whom life has trained
To long-tried skill, the issues of their thoughts
Live and are mighty. Come then, noblest one,
Raise up our city; come, take heed to it;
As yet this land, for all thy former zeal,
Calls thee its saviour: do not give us cause
So to remember this thy reign, as men
Who having risen, then fall low again;
But raise our state to safety. Omens good
Were then with thee; thou didst thy work, and now
Be equal to thyself! If thou wilt rule,
As thou dost sway, this land wherein we dwell,
'Twere better far to rule o'er living men

[2] The tribute of human victims paid to the Sphinx, the "Muse of the slaughtered," till her riddle was solved by Œdipus.

Than o'er a realm dispeopled. Nought avails,
Or tower or ship, when men are not within.

ŒDIPUS.—O children, wailing loud, ye come with wish
Well-known, not unknown; well I know that ye
Are smitten, one and all, with taint of plague,
And yet though smitten, none that taint of plague
Feels, as I feel it. Each his burden bears,
His own and not another's; but my heart
Mourns for the state, for you, and for myself;
And, lo, ye wake me not as plunged in sleep,
But find me weeping, weeping many tears,
And treading many paths in wandering thought;
And that one way of health I, seeking, found,
This have I acted on. Menœkeus' son,
Creon, my kinsman, have I sent to seek
The Pythian home of Phœbos, there to learn
The words or deeds wherewith to save the state;
And even now I measure o'er the time,
And ask, "How fares he?" grieving, for he stays,
Most strangely, far beyond the appointed day;
But when he comes, I should be base indeed,
Failing to do whate'er the God declares.

PRIEST.—Well hast thou spoken! And these bring me word,
That Creon comes advancing on his way.

ŒDIPUS.—O king Apollo, may he come with chance
That brings deliverance, as his looks are bright.

PRIEST.—If one may guess, he's glad. He had not come
Crowned with rich wreaths [8] of fruitful laurel else.

ŒDIPUS.—Soon we shall know. Our voice can reach him now.
Say, prince, our well-beloved, Menœkeus' son,
What sacred answer bring'st thou from the God?

Enter Creon.

CREON.—A right good answer! E'en our evil plight,
If all goes well, may end in highest good.

ŒDIPUS.—What were the words? Nor full of eager hope,
Nor trembling panic, list I to thy speech.

[8] Creon, coming from Delphi, wears a wreath of the Parnassian laurel, its red berries mingling with the dark, glossy leaves.

CREON.—I, if thou wish, am ready, these being by,
To tell thee all, or go within the gates.
ŒDIPUS.—Speak out to all. I sorrow more for them
Than for the woe which touches me alone.
CREON.—I then will speak what from the God I heard:
King Phœbos bids us chase the plague away
(The words were plain) now cleaving to our land,
Nor cherish guilt which still remains unhealed.
ŒDIPUS.—But with what rites? And what the deed itself?
CREON.—Or drive far off, or blood for blood repay;
That guilt of blood is blasting all the state.
ŒDIPUS.—But whose fate is it that He pointeth to?
CREON.—Once, O my king, ere thou didst guide our state,
Our sovereign Laios ruled o'er all the land.
ŒDIPUS.—So have I heard, for him I never saw.
CREON.—Now the God clearly bids us, he being dead,
To take revenge on those who shed his blood.
ŒDIPUS.—Yes; but where are they? How to track the course
Of guilt all shrouded in the doubtful past?
CREON.—In this our land, so said He; those who seek
Shall find; unsought, we lose it utterly.
ŒDIPUS.—Was it at home, or in the field, or else
In some strange land that Laios met his doom?
CREON.—He went, so spake he, pilgrim-wise afar,
And never more came back as forth he went.
ŒDIPUS.—Was there no courier, none who shared his road,
Who knew what, learning, one might turn to good?
CREON.—Dead were they all, save one who fled for fear,
And he knew nought to tell but one small fact.
ŒDIPUS [*Interrupting*].—And what was that? One fact might teach us much,
Had we but one small starting-point of hope.
CREON.—He used to tell that robbers fell on him,
Not man for man, but with outnumbering force.
ŒDIPUS.—How could the robber e'er have dared this deed,
Unless some bribe from hence had tempted him?
CREON.—So men might think; but Laios having died,
There was no helper for us in our ills.
ŒDIPUS.—What ill then hindered, when your sovereignty
Had fallen thus, from searching out the truth?

CREON.—The Sphinx, with her dark riddle, bade us look
At nearer facts, and leave the dim obscure.
ŒDIPUS.—Well, be it mine to track them to their source.
Right well hath Phœbos, and right well hast thou,
Shown for the dead your care, and ye shall find,
As is most meet, in me a helper true,
Aiding at once my country and the God.
It is not for the sake of friends remote,
But for mine own, that I dispel this pest;
For he that slew him, whosoe'er he be,
Will wish, perchance, with such a blow to smite
Me also. Helping him, I help myself.
And now, my children, rise with utmost speed
From off these steps, and raise your suppliant boughs;
And let another call my people here,
The race of Cadmos, and make known that I
Will do my taskwork to the uttermost:
So, as God wills, we prosper, or we fail.
PRIEST.—Rise then, my children, 'twas for this we came,
For these good tidings which those lips have brought,
And Phœbos, who hath sent these oracles,
Pray that He come to save, and heal our plague.

[*Exeunt Creon, Priests, and Suppliants: marching in procession.*

Enter Chorus of Theban citizens.

STROPHE I.

CHORUS.—O word of Zeus,[4] glad-voiced, with what intent
From Pytho, bright with gold,
Cam'st thou to Thebes, our city of high fame?
For lo: I faint for fear,
Through all my soul I quiver in suspense,
(Hear, Io Pæan! God of Delos,[5] hear!)
In brooding dread, what doom, of present growth,
Or as the months roll on, thy hand will work;
Tell me, O deathless Voice, thou child of golden hope!

[4] The oracle, though given by Apollo, is yet the voice of Zeus, of whom Apollo is but the prophet, spokesman.

[5] Apollo, born in Delos, passed through Attica to Pytho, his shrine at Delphi.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thee first, Zeus-born Athena, thee I call,
Divine and deathless One,
And next thy sister, Goddess of our land,
Our Artemis, who sits,
Queen of our market, on encircled throne;
And Phœbos, the far-darter! O ye Three,[6]
Shine on us, and deliver us from ill!
If e'er before, when storms of woe oppressed,
Ye stayed the fiery tide, O come and help us now!

STROPHE II.

Ah me, ah me, for sorrows numberless
Press on my soul;
And all the host is smitten, and our thoughts
Lack weapons to resist.
For increase fails of fruits of goodly earth,
And women sink in childbirth's wailing pangs,
And one by one, as flit
The swift-winged birds through air,
So, flitting to the shore of Him who dwells
Down in the darkling West,[7]
Fleeter than mightiest fire,
Thou see'st them passing on.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Yea, numberless are they who perish thus;
And on the earth,
Still breeding plague, unpitied infants lie,
Cast out all ruthlessly;
And wives and mothers, grey with hoary age,
Some here, some there, by every altar mourn,
With woe and sorrow crushed,
And chant their wailing plaint.
Clear thrills the sense their solemn Pæan cry,

[6] The Three named—Athena, Artemis, Phœbos—were the guardian deities of Thebes; but the tendency to bring three names together in one group in oaths and invocations runs through Greek worship generally.

[7] Pluto, dwelling where the sun sinks into darkness. The symbolism of the West as the region of dead and evil, of the East as that of light and truth, belongs to the earliest parables of nature.

And the sad anthem song;
Hear, golden child of Zeus,
And send us bright-eyed help.

STROPHE III.

And Ares the destroyer drive away![8]
Who now, though hushed the din
Of brazen shield and spear,
With fiercest battle-cry
Wars on me mightily.
Bid him go back in flight,
Retreat from this our land.
Or to the ocean bed,
Where Amphitrite sleeps,
Or to that haven of the homeless sea
Which sweeps the Thracian shore.[9]
If waning night spares aught,
That doth the day assail:
Do thou, then, Sire almighty,
Wielding the lightning's strength,
Blast him with thy dread fiery thunderbolts.

ANTISTROPHE III.

And thou, Lyceian king, the wolf's dread foe,
Fain would I see thy darts
From out thy golden bow
Go forth invincible,
Helping and bringing aid;
And with them, winged with fire,
The rays of Artemis,
With which on Lyceian hills,
She moveth on her course.
And last, O golden-crowned, I call on thee,
Named after this our land,[10]

[8] The Pestilence, previously personified, is now identified with Ares, the God of slaughter, and, as such, the foe of the more benign deities.

[9] The Chorus prays that the pestilence may be driven either to the far western ocean, beyond the pillars of Heracles, the couch of Amphitrite, the bride of Neptune, or to the northern coasts of the Euxine, where Ares was worshipped as the special God of the Thracians.

[10] Bacchos, as born in Thebes, was known as the Cadmeian king, the Bœotian God, while Thebes took from him the epithet Bacchia.

Bacchos, all flushed with wine,
With clamor loud and long,
Wandering with Mænads wild,
Flashing with blazing torch,
Draw near against the God whom all the Gods disown.[11]

ŒDIPUS.—Thou prayest, and for thy prayers, if thou wilt hear
My words, and treat the dire disease with skill,
Thou shalt find help and respite from thy pain—
My words, which I, a stranger to report,
A stranger to the deed, will now declare:
For I myself should fail to track it far,
Finding no trace to guide my steps aright.
But now, as I have joined you since the deed,
A citizen with citizens, I speak
To all the sons of Cadmos. Lives there one
Who knows of Laios, son of Labdacos,
The hand that slew him; him I bid to tell
His tale to me; and should it chance he shrinks
From raking up the charge against himself,
Still let him speak; no heavier doom is his
Than to depart uninjured from the land;
Or, if there be that knows an alien arm
As guilty, let him hold his peace no more;
I will secure his gain and thanks beside.
But if ye hold your peace, if one through fear,
Or for himself, or friend, shall hide this thing,
What then I purpose let him hear from me.
That man I banish, whosoe'er he be,
From out this land whose power and throne are mine;
And none may give him shelter, none speak to him,
Nor join with him in prayers and sacrifice,
Nor give him share in holy lustral stream;
But all shall thrust him from their homes, declared
Our curse and our pollution, as but now
The Pythian God's prophetic word has shown:
With acts like this, I stand before you here,
A helper to the God and to the dead.
All this I charge you do, for mine own sake,

[11] So, in the Iliad, Ares is, of all the Gods of Olympos, most hateful to Zeus (v. 890), as the cause of all strife and slaughter.

And for the God's, and for this land that pines,
Barren and god-deserted. Wrong 'twould be
E'en if no voice from heaven had urged us on,
That ye should leave the stain of guilt uncleansed,
Your noblest chief, your king himself, being slain.
Yea, rather, seek and find. And since I reign,
Wielding the might his hand did wield before,
Filling his couch, and calling his wife mine,
Yea, and our offspring too, but for the fate
That fell on his, had grown in brotherhood;
But now an evil chance on his head swooped;
And therefore will I strive my best for him,
As for my father, and will go all lengths
To seek and find the murderer, him who slew
The son of Labdacos, and Polydore,
And earlier Cadmos, and Agenor old;[12]
And for all those who hearken not, I pray
The gods to give them neither fruit of earth,
Nor seed of woman,[13] but consume their lives
With this dire plague, or evil worse than this.
And for the man who did the guilty deed,
Whether alone he lurks, or leagued with more,
I pray that he may waste his life away,
For vile deeds vilely dying; and for me,
If in my house, I knowing it, he dwells,
May every curse I spake on my head fall.
And you, the rest, the men from Cadmos sprung,
To whom these words approve themselves as good,
May righteousness befriend you, and the gods,
In full accord, dwell with you evermore.

CHORUS.—Since thou hast bound me by a curse, O king,
I will speak thus. I neither slew the man,
Nor know who slew. To say who did the deed
Is quest for Him who sent us on the search.

ŒDIPUS.—Right well thou speak'st, but man's best strength must fail
To force the Gods to do the things they will not.

[12] Œdipus, as if identifying himself already with the kingly house, goes through the whole genealogy up to the remote ancestor.

[13] The imprecation agrees almost verbally with the curse of the Amphictyonic councils against sacrilege.

CHORUS.—Fain would I speak the thoughts that second stand.
ŒDIPUS.—Though there be third, shrink not from speaking out.
CHORUS.—One man I know, a prince, whose insight deep
Sees clear as princely Phœbos, and from him,
Teiresias, one might learn, O king, the truth.
ŒDIPUS.—That too is done. No loiterer I in this,
For I, on Creon's hint, two couriers sent
To summon him, and wonder that he comes not.
CHORUS.—Old rumors are there also, dark and dumb.
ŒDIPUS.—And what are they? I weigh the slightest word.
CHORUS.—'Twas said he died by some chance traveller's hand.
ŒDIPUS.—I, too, heard that. But none the eye-witness sees.
CHORUS.—If yet his soul be capable of awe,
Hearing thy curses, he will shrink from them.
ŒDIPUS.—Words fright not him, who doing, knows no fear.
CHORUS.—Well, here is one who'll put him to the proof.
For lo! they bring the seer inspired of God,
With whom alone of all men, truth abides.

Enter Teiresias, blind, and guided by a boy.

ŒDIPUS.—Teiresias! thou whose mind embraceth all,
Told or untold, of heaven or paths of earth;
Thou knowest, although thou see'st not, what a pest
Dwells on us, and we find in thee, O prince,
Our one deliverer, yea, our only help:
For Phœbos (if the couriers told thee not)
Sent back this word to us, who sent to ask,
That this one way was open to escape
From this fell plague—if those who Laios slew,
We in our turn discovering should slay,
Or drive them forth as exiles from the land.
Thou, therefore, grudge not either sign from birds,
Or any other path of prophecy;
But save the city, save thyself, save me;
Save from the curse the dead has left behind;
On thee we hang. To use our means, our power,
In doing good, is noblest service owned.
TEIRESIAS.—Ah me! ah me! how dread is wisdom's gift,
When no good issue waiteth on the wise!

I knew it all too well, and then forgot,
Or else I had not on this journey come.
ŒDIPUS.—What means this? How despondingly thou com'st!
TEIRESIAS.—Let me go home! for thus thy lot shalt thou,
And I mine own, bear easiest, if thou yield.
ŒDIPUS.—No loyal words thou speak'st, nor true to Thebes
Who reared thee, holding back this oracle.
TEIRESIAS.—I see thy lips speak words that profit not:
And lest I too a like fault should commit . . .
ŒDIPUS.—Now, by the Gods, unless thy reason fails,
Refuse us not, who all implore thy help.
TEIRESIAS.—Ah! Reason fails you all, but ne'er will I
Say what thou bidd'st, lest I thy troubles show.
ŒDIPUS.—What mean'st thou, then? Thou know'st and wilt not tell,
But wilt betray us, and the state destroy?
TEIRESIAS.—I will not pain myself nor thee. Why, then,
All vainly question? Thou shalt never know.
ŒDIPUS.—Oh, basest of the base! (for thou would'st stir
A heart of stone;) and wilt thou never tell,
But still abide relentless and unmoved?
TEIRESIAS.—My mood thou blamest, but thou dost not know
What dwelleth with thee while thou chidest me.
ŒDIPUS.—And who would not feel anger, hearing words
Like those with which thou dost the state insult?
TEIRESIAS.—Well! come they will, though I should hold my peace.
ŒDIPUS.—If come they must, thy duty is to speak.
TEIRESIAS.—I speak no more. So, if thou wilt, rage on,
With every mood of wrath most desperate.
ŒDIPUS.—Yes; I will not refrain, so fierce my wrath,
From speaking all my thought. I think that thou
Did'st plot the deed, and do it, though the blow
Thy hands, it may be, dealt not. Had'st thou seen,
I would have said it was thy deed alone.
TEIRESIAS.—And has it come to this? I charge thee, hold
To thy late edict, and from this day forth
Speak not to me, nor yet to these, for thou,
Thou are the accursèd plague-spot of the land.

ŒDIPUS.—Art thou so shameless as to vent such words,
And dost thou think to 'scape scot-free for this?
TEIRESIAS.—I have escaped. The strength of truth is mine.
ŒDIPUS.—Who prompted thee? This comes not from thine art.
TEIRESIAS.—'Twas thou. Thou mad'st me speak against my will.
ŒDIPUS.—What say'st thou? Speak again, that I may know.
TEIRESIAS.—Didst thou not know before? Or dost thou try me?
ŒDIPUS.—I could not say I knew it. Speak again.
TEIRESIAS.—I say thou art the murderer whom thou seek'st.
ŒDIPUS.—Thou shalt not twice revile, and go unharmed.
TEIRESIAS.—And shall I tell thee more to stir thy rage?
ŒDIPUS.—Say what thou pleasest. 'Twill be said in vain.
TEIRESIAS.—I say that thou, in vilest intercourse
With those that dearest are, dost blindly live,
Nor see'st the depth of evil thou hast reached.
ŒDIPUS.—And dost thou think to say these things unscathed?
TEIRESIAS.—I doubt it not, if truth retain her might.
ŒDIPUS.—That might is not for thee; thou can'st not claim it,
Blind in thine ears, thy reason, and thine eyes.
TEIRESIAS.—How wretched thou, thus hurling this reproach!
Such, all too soon, will all men hurl at thee.
ŒDIPUS.—In one long night thou liv'st, and can'st not hurt,
Or me, or any man who sees the light.
TEIRESIAS.—'Tis not thy doom to owe thy fall to me;
Apollo is enough, be His the task.
ŒDIPUS.—Are these devices Creon's, or thine own?
TEIRESIAS.—It is not Creon harms thee, but thyself.
ŒDIPUS.—O wealth, and sovereignty, and noblest skill
Surpassing skill in life so envy-fraught,
How great the ill-will dogging all your steps!
If for the sake of kingship, which the state
Hath given, unasked for, freely in mine hands,
Creon the faithful, found my friend throughout,
Now seeks with masked attack to drive me forth,
And hires this wizard, plotter of foul schemes,
A vagrant mountebank, whose sight is clear
For pay alone, but in his art stone-blind.
Is it not so? When wast thou true seer found?

Why, when the monster with her song was here,
Spak'st thou no word our countrymen to help?
And yet the riddle lay above the ken
Of common men, and called for prophet's skill.
And this thou show'dst thou had'st not, nor by bird,
Nor any God made known; but then I came,
I, Œdipus, who nothing know, and slew her,
With mine own counsel winning, all untaught
By flight of birds. And now thou would'st expel me,
And think'st to take thy stand by Creon's throne.
But, as I think, both thou and he that plans
With thee, will hunt this mischief to your cost;
And but that I must think of thee as old,
Thou had'st learnt wisdom, suffering what thou plann'st.

CHORUS.—Far as we dare to guess, we think his words,
And thine, O Œdipus, in wrath are said.
Not such as these we need, but this to see,
How best to solve the God's great oracles.

TEIRESIAS.—King though thou be, I claim an equal right
To make reply. That power, at least, is mine:
For I am not thy slave, but Loxias';[14]
Nor shall I stand on Creon's patronage:
And this I say, since thou my blindness mock'st,
That thou, though seeing, failest to perceive
Thy evil plight, nor where thou liv'st, nor yet
With whom thou dwellest. Know'st thou even this,
Whence thou art sprung? All ignorant thou sinn'st
Against thine own, beneath, and on the earth:
And soon a two-edged Curse from sire and mother,
With foot of fear, shall chase thee forth from us,
Now seeing all things clear, then all things dark.
And will not then each creek repeat thy wail,
Each valley of Kithæron echoing ring,
When thou discern'st the marriage, fatal port,
To which thy prosp'rous voyage brought thy bark?
And other ills, in countless multitude,
Thou see'st not yet, shall make thy lot as one
With sire's and child's. Vent forth thy wrath then loud,

[14] The special name of Apollo as the "prophetes" of Zeus, and therefore the guardian of all seers and prophets.

On Creon, and my speech. There lives not man
Whose life shall waste more wretchedly than thine.
ŒDIPUS.—Can this be longer borne! Away with thee!
A curse light on thee! Wilt thou not depart?
Wilt thou not turn and from this house go back?
TEIRESIAS.—I had not come, had'st thou not called me here.
ŒDIPUS.—I knew not thou would'st speak so foolishly;
Else I had hardly fetched thee to my house.
TEIRESIAS.—We then, so seems it thee, are fools from birth,
But, unto those who gave thee birth, seem wise.
[*Turns to go.*
ŒDIPUS [*starting forward*].—What? Stay thy foot.
What mortal gave me birth?
TEIRESIAS.—This day shall give thy birth, and work thy doom.
ŒDIPUS.—What riddles dark and dim thou lov'st to speak.
TEIRESIAS.—Yes. But thy skill excels in solving such.
ŒDIPUS.—Scoff thou at that in which thou'lt find me strong.
TEIRESIAS.—And yet this same success has worked thy fall.
ŒDIPUS.—I little care, if I have saved the state.
TEIRESIAS.—Well, then, I go. Do thou, boy, lead me on!
ŒDIPUS.—Let him lead on. Most hateful art thou near;
Thou can'st not pain me more when thou art gone.
TEIRESIAS.—I go then, having said the things I came
To say. No fear of thee compels me. Thine
Is not the power to hurt me. And I say,
This man whom thou dost seek with hue-and-cry,
As murderer of Laios, he is here,
In show an alien sojourner, but in truth
A home-born Theban. No delight to him
Will that discovery bring. Blind, having seen,
Poor, having rolled in wealth—he, with a staff
Feeling his way, to a strange land shall go!
And to his sons shall he be seen at once
Father and brother, and of her who bore him
Husband and son, sharing his father's bed,
His father's murd'rer. Go thou then within,
And brood o'er this, and, if thou find'st me fail,
Say that my skill in prophecy is gone.
[*Exeunt Œdipus and Teiresias.*

STROPHE I.

CHORUS.—Who was it that the rock oracular
Of Delphi spake of, working
With bloody hands of all dread deeds most dread?
Time is it now for him,
Swifter than fastest steed to bend his flight;
For, in full armor clad,
Upon him darts, with fire
And lightning flash, the radiant Son of Zeus,
And with Him come in train
The dread and awful Powers,
The Destinies that fail not of their aim.

ANTISTROPHE I.

For from Parnassos' heights, enwreathed with snow,
Gleaming, but now there shone
The oracle that bade us, one and all,
Track the unnamed, unknown;
For, lo! he wanders through the forest wild,
In caves and over rocks,
As strays the mountain bull,
In dreary loneliness with dreary tread,
Seeking in vain to shun
Dread words from central shrine;[15]
Yet they around him hover, full of life.

STROPHE II.

Fearfully, fearfully the augur moves me.
Nor answering, aye nor no!
And what to say I know not, but float on,
And hover still in hopes,
And fail to scan things present or to come.
For not of old, nor now,
Learnt I what cause of strife at variance set
The old Labdakid race
With him, the child and heir of Polybos,

[15] Delphi, thought of by the Greeks, as Jerusalem was in the Middle Ages, as the centre of the whole earth.

Nor can I test the tale,
And take my stand against the well-earned fame
Of Œdipus, my lord,
As champion of the old Labdakid race,
For deaths obscure and dark!

ANTISTROPHE II.

For Zeus and King Apollo, they are wise,
And know the hearts of men:
But that a seer excelleth me in skill,
This is no judgment true;
And one man may another's wisdom pass,
By wisdom higher still.
I, for my part, before the word is plain,
Will ne'er assent in blame.
Full clear, the wingèd Maiden-monster came
Against him, and he proved,
By sharpest test, that he was wise indeed,
By all the land beloved,
And never, from my heart at least, shall come
Words that accuse of guilt.

Enter Creon.

CREON.—I come, ye citizens, as having learnt
Our sovereign, Œdipus, accuses me
Of dreadful things I cannot bear to hear.
For if, in these calamities of ours,
He thinks he suffers wrongly at my hands,
In word or deed, aught tending to his hurt,
I set no value on a life prolonged,
While this reproach hangs on me; for its harm
Affects not slightly, but is direst shame,
If through the town my name as villain rings,
By thee and by my friends a villain called.
CHORUS.—But this reproach, it may be, came from wrath
All hasty, rather than from calm, clear mind.
CREON.—And who informed him that the seer, seduced
By my devices, spoke his lying words?
CHORUS.—The words were said, but with what mind I know not.

CREON.—And was it with calm eyes and judgment calm,
This charge was brought against my name and fame?
CHORUS.—I cannot say. To what our rulers do
I close my eyes. But here he comes himself.

Enter Œdipus.

ŒDIPUS.—Ho, there! is't thou? And does thy boldness soar
So shameless as to come beneath my roof,
When thou, 'tis clear, dost plot against my life,
And seek'st to rob me of my sovereignty?
Is it, by all the Gods, that thou hast seen
Or cowardice or folly in my soul,
That thou hast laid thy plans? Or thoughtest thou
That I should neither see thy sinuous wiles,
Nor, knowing, ward them off? This scheme of thine,
Is it not wild, backed nor by force nor friends,
To seek the power which force and wealth must grasp?
CREON.—Dost know what thou wilt do? For words of thine
Hear like words back, and as thou hearest, judge.
ŒDIPUS.—Cunning of speech art thou. But I am slow
Of thee to learn, whom I have found my foe.
CREON.—Of this, then, first, hear what I have to speak. . . .
ŒDIPUS.—But this, then, say not, that thou art not vile.
CREON.—If that thou thinkest self-willed pride avails,
Apart from judgment, know thou art not wise.
ŒDIPUS.—If that thou think'st, thy kinsman injuring,
To do it unchastised, thou art not wise.
CREON.—In this, I grant, thou speakest right; but tell,
What form of injury hast thou to endure?
ŒDIPUS.—Didst thou, or didst thou not, thy counsel give,
Someone to send to fetch this reverend seer?
CREON.—And even now by that advice I hold!
ŒDIPUS.—How long a time has passed since Laios
chanced . . . [*Pauses.*
CREON.—Chanced to do what? I understand not yet.
ŒDIPUS.—Since he was smitten with the deadly blow?
CREON.—The years would measure out a long, long tale.
ŒDIPUS.—And was this seer then practising his art?
CREON.—Full wise as now, and equal in repute.
ŒDIPUS.—Did he at that time say a word of me?

CREON.—Not one, while I, at any rate, was by.
ŒDIPUS.—What? Held ye not your quest upon the dead?
CREON.—Of course we held it, but we nothing heard.
ŒDIPUS.—How was it he, this wise one, spoke not then?
CREON.—I know not, and, not knowing, hold my peace.
ŒDIPUS.—Thy deed thou know'st, and with clear mind could'st speak!
CREON.—What is't? I'll not deny it, if I know.
ŒDIPUS.—Were he not leagued with thee he ne'er had talked
Of felon deed by me on Laios done.
CREON.—If he says this, thou know'st it. I of thee
Desire to learn, as thou hast learnt of me.
ŒDIPUS.—Learn then; on me no guilt of blood shall rest.
CREON.—Well, then—my sister? dost thou own her wife?
ŒDIPUS.—I cannot meet this question with denial.
CREON.—Rul'st thou this land in equal right with her?
ŒDIPUS.—Her every wish she doth from me receive.
CREON.—And am not I co-equal with you twain?
ŒDIPUS.—Yes; and just here thou show'st thyself false friend.
CREON.—Not so, if thou would'st reason with thyself,
As I will reason. First reflect on this;
Supposest thou that one would rather choose
To reign with fears than sleep untroubled sleep,
His power being equal? I, for one, prize less
The name of king than deeds of kingly power;
And so would all who learn in wisdom's school.
Now without fear I have what I desire,
At thy hand given. Did I rule, myself,
I might do much unwillingly. Why then
Should sovereignty exert a softer charm,
Than power and might uncheckered by a care?
I am not yet so cheated by myself,
As to desire aught else but honest gain.
Now all men hail me, everyone salutes,
Now they who seek thy favor court my smiles,
For on this hinge does all their fortune turn.
Why then should I leave this to hunt for that?
My mind, retaining reason, ne'er could act
The villain's part. I was not born to love
Such thoughts, nor join another in the act;

And as a proof of this, go thou thyself,
And ask at Pytho whether I brought back,
In very deed, the oracles I heard.
And if thou find me plotting with the seer,
In common concert, not by one decree,
But two, thine own and mine, put me to death.
But charge me not with crime on shadowy proof;
For neither is it just, in random thought,
The bad to count as good, nor good as bad;
For to thrust out a friend of noble heart,
Is like the parting with the life we love.
And this in time thou'lt know, for time alone
Makes manifest the righteous. Of the vile
Thou may'st detect the vileness in a day.

CHORUS.—To one who fears to fall, his words seem good;
O king, swift counsels are not always safe.

ŒDIPUS.—But when a man is swift in wily schemes,
Swift must I be to baffle plot with plot;
And if I stand and wait, he wins the day,
And all my state to rack and ruin goes.

CREON.—What seek'st thou, then? to drive me from the land?

ŒDIPUS.—Not so. I seek thy death, not banishment.

CREON.—When thou show'st first what grudge I bear to thee.

ŒDIPUS.—And say'st thou this defying, yielding not?

CREON.—I see your mind is gone.

ŒDIPUS.— My right I mind.

CREON.—Mine has an equal claim.

ŒDIPUS.— Nay, thou art vile.

CREON.—And if thy mind is darkened . . .?

ŒDIPUS.— Still obey!

CREON.—Nay, not a tyrant king.

ŒDIPUS.— O country mine!

CREON.—That country, too, is mine, not thine alone.

CHORUS.—Cease, O my princes! In good time I see Jocasta coming hither from the house;
And it were well with her to hush this brawl.

Enter Jocasta.

JOCASTA.—Why, O ye wretched ones, this strife of tongues
Raise ye in your unwisdom, nor are shamed,

Our country suffering, private griefs to stir?
Come thou within; and thou, O Creon, go;
Bring not a trifling sore to mischief great!

CREON.—My sister! Œdipus thy husband claims
The right to do me one of two great wrongs,
To thrust me from my fatherland, or slay me.

ŒDIPUS.—'Tis even so, for I have found him, wife,
Against my life his evil wiles devising.

CREON.—May I ne'er prosper, but accursèd die,
If I have done the things he says I did!

JOCASTA.—Oh, by the Gods, believe him, Œdipus!
Respect his oath, which calls the Gods to hear;
And reverence me, and these who stand by thee.

CHORUS.—Hearken, my king! be calmer, I implore!

ŒDIPUS.—What wilt thou that I yield?

CHORUS.— Oh, have respect
To one not weak before, who now is strong
In this his oath.

ŒDIPUS.— And know'st thou what thou ask'st?

CHORUS.—I know right well.

ŒDIPUS.— Say on, then, what thou wilt.

CHORUS.—Hurl not to shame, on grounds of mere mistrust,
The friend on whom no taint of evil hangs.

ŒDIPUS.—Know then that, seeking this, thou seek'st, in truth,
To work my death, or else my banishment.

CHORUS.—Nay, by the Sun-God, Helios, chief of Gods![16]
May I, too, die, of God and man accursed,
If I wish aught like this! But on my soul,
Our wasting land dwells heavily; ills on ills
Still coming, new upon the heels of old.

ŒDIPUS.—Let him depart then, even though I die,
Or from my country be thrust forth in shame:
Thy face, not his, I view with pitying eye;
For him, where'er he be, is nought but hate.

CREON.—Thou'rt loth to yield, 'twould seem, and wilt be vexed
When this thy wrath is over: moods like thine
Are fitly to themselves most hard to bear.

ŒDIPUS.—Wilt thou not go, and leave me?

[16] Helios, specially invoked as the giver of light, discerning and making manifest all hidden things.

CREON.— I will go,
By thee misjudged, but known as just by these. [*Exit.*]
CHORUS.—Why, lady, art thou slow to lead him in?
JOCASTA.—I fain would learn how this sad chance arose.
CHORUS.—Blind haste of speech there was, and wrong will sting.
JOCASTA.—From both of them?
CHORUS.— Yea, both.
JOCASTA.— And what said each?
CHORUS.—Enough for me, enough, our land laid low,
It seems, to leave the quarrel where it stopped.
ŒDIPUS.—See'st thou, thou good in counsel, what thou dost,
Slighting my cause, and toning down thy zeal?
CHORUS.—My chief, not once alone I spoke,
Unwise, unapt for wisdom should I seem,
Were I to turn from thee aside,
Who, when my country rocked in storm,
Didst right her course. Ah! if thou can'st,
Steer her well onward now.
JOCASTA.—Tell me, my king, what cause of fell debate
Has bred this discord, and provoked thy soul.
ŒDIPUS.—Thee will I tell, for thee I honor more
Than these. 'Twas Creon and his plots against me.
JOCASTA.—Say then, if clearly thou can'st tell the strife.
ŒDIPUS.—He says that I am Laios' murderer.
JOCASTA.—Of his own knowledge, or by someone taught?
ŒDIPUS.—A scoundrel seer suborning. For himself,
He takes good care to free his lips from blame.
JOCASTA.—Leave now thyself, and all thy thoughts of this,
And list to me, and learn how little skill
In art prophetic mortal man may claim;
And of this truth I'll give thee one short proof.
There came to Laios once an oracle,
(I say not that it came from Phœbos' self,
But from his servants,) that his fate was fixed
By his son's hand to fall—his own and mine;
And him, so rumor runs, a robber band
Of aliens slay, where meet the three great roads.
Nor did three days succeed the infant's birth,
Before, by other hands, he cast him forth,

Piercing his ankles, on a lonely hill.
Here, then, Apollo failed to make the boy
His father's murderer; nor by his son's hands,
Doom that he dreaded, did our Laios die;
Such things divining oracles proclaimed;
Therefore regard them not. Whate'er the God
Desires to search He will himself declare.

ŒDIPUS [*trembling*].—Ah, as but now I heard thee speak, my queen,
Strange whirl of soul, and rush of thoughts o'ercome me.

JOCASTA.—What vexing care bespeaks this sudden change?

ŒDIPUS.—I thought I heard thee say that Laios fell,
Smitten to death, where meet the three great roads.

JOCASTA.—So was it said, and still the rumors hold.

ŒDIPUS.—Where was the spot in which this matter passed?

JOCASTA.—They call the country Phocis, and the roads [17]
From Delphi and from Daulia there converge.

ŒDIPUS.—And what the interval of time since then?

JOCASTA.—But just before thou camest to possess
And rule this land the tidings reached our city.

ŒDIPUS.—Great Zeus! what fate hast thou decreed for me?

JOCASTA.—What thought is this, my Œdipus, of thine?

ŒDIPUS.—Ask me not yet, but Laios . . . tell of him,
His build, his features, and his years of life.

JOCASTA.—Tall was he, and the white hairs snowed his head,
And in his form not much unlike to thee.

ŒDIPUS.—Woe, woe is me! so seems it I have plunged
All blindly into curses terrible.

JOCASTA.—What sayest thou? I fear to look at thee.

ŒDIPUS.—I tremble lest the seer has seen indeed:
But thou can'st clear it, answering yet once more.

JOCASTA.—And I too fear, yet what thou ask'st I'll tell.

ŒDIPUS.—Went he in humble guise, or with a troop
Of spearmen, as becomes a man that rules?

JOCASTA.—Five were they altogether, and of them
One was a herald, and one chariot bore him.

ŒDIPUS.—Woe! woe! 'tis all too clear. And who was he
That told these tidings to thee, O my queen?

[17] The meeting place of the three roads is now the site of a decayed Turkish village, the Stavrodrom of Mparpanas.

JOCASTA.—A servant who alone escaped with life.
ŒDIPUS.—And does he chance to dwell among us now?
JOCASTA.—Not so; for from the time when he returned,
And found thee bearing sway, and Laios dead,
He, at my hand, a suppliant, implored
This boon, to send him to the distant fields
To feed his flocks, as far as possible
From this our city. And I sent him forth;
For though a slave, he might have claimed yet more.
ŒDIPUS.—Ah! could we fetch him quickly back again!
JOCASTA.—That may well be. But why dost thou wish this?
ŒDIPUS.—I fear, O queen, that words best left unsaid
Have passed these lips, and therefore wish to see him.
JOCASTA.—Well, he shall come. But some small claim have I,
O king, to learn what touches thee with woe.
ŒDIPUS.—Thou shalt not fail to learn it, now that I
Have gone so far in bodings. Whom should I
More than to thee tell all the passing chance?
I had a father, Polybos of Corinth,
And Merope of Doris was my mother,
And I was held in honor by the rest
Who dwelt there, till this accident befel,
Worthy of wonder, of the heat unworthy
It roused within me. Thus it chanced: A man
At supper, in his cups, with wine o'ertaken,
Reviles me as a spurious changeling boy;
And I, sore vexèd, hardly for that day
Restrained myself. And when the morrow came
I went and charged my father and my mother
With what I thus had heard. They heaped reproach
On him who stirred the matter, and I soothed
My soul with what they told me; yet it teased
Still vexing more and more; and so I went,
Unknown to them, to Pytho, and the God
Sent me forth shamed, unanswered in my quest;
And other things He spake, dread, dire, and dark,
That I should join in wedlock with my mother,
Beget a brood that men should loathe to look at,
Be murderer of the father that begot me.
And, hearing this, I straight from Corinth fled,

The stars thenceforth the land-marks of my way,
And fled where never more mine eyes might see
The shame of those dire oracles fulfilled;
And as I went I reached the spot where he,
This king, thou tell'st me, met the fatal blow.
And now, O lady, I will tell the truth.
Wending my steps that way where three roads meet,
There met me first a herald, and a man
Like him thou told'st of, riding on his car,
Drawn by young colts. With rough and hasty force
They drove me from the road—the driver first,
And that old man himself; and then in rage
I strike the driver, who had turned me back.
And when the old man sees it, watching me
As by the chariot-side I passed, he struck
My forehead with a double-pointed goad.
But we were more than quits, for in a trice
With this right hand I struck him with my staff,
And he rolls backward from his chariot's seat.
And then I slay them all. And if it chance
That Laios and this stranger are akin,
What man more wretched than this man who speaks?
What man more harassed by the vexing Gods?
He whom none now, or alien, or of Thebes,
May welcome to their house, or speak to him,
But thrust him forth an exile. And 'twas I,
None other, who against myself proclaimed
These curses. And the bed of him that died
I with my hands, by which he fell, defile.
Am I not born to evil, all unclean?
If I must flee, yet still in flight my doom
Is never more to see the friends I love,
Nor tread my country's soil; or else to bear
The guilt of incest, and my father slay,
Yea, Polybos, who begat and brought me up.
Would not a man say right who said that here
Some cruel God was pressing hard on me?
Not that, not that, at least, thou Presence, pure
And awful, of the Gods; may I ne'er look
On such a day as that, but far away

Depart unseen from all the haunts of men,
Before such great pollution comes on me.
CHORUS.—We, too, O king, are grieved, yet hope thou on,
Till thou hast asked the man who then was by.
ŒDIPUS.—And this indeed is all the hope I have,
Waiting until that shepherd-slave appear.
JOCASTA.—And when he comes, what ground for hope is there?
ŒDIPUS.—I'll tell thee. Should he now repeat the tale
Thou told'st me, I, at least, stand free from guilt.
JOCASTA.—What special word was that thou heard'st from me?
ŒDIPUS.—Thou said'st he told that robbers slew his lord,
And should he give their number as the same
Now as before, it was not I who slew him,
For one man could not be the same as many.
But if he speak of one man, all alone,
Then, all too plain, the deed cleaves fast to me.
JOCASTA.—But know, the thing was said, and clearly said,
And now he cannot from his word draw back.
Not I alone, but the whole city, heard it;
And should he now retract his former tale,
Not then, my husband, will he rightly show
The death of Laios, who, as Loxias told,
By my son's hands should die; and yet, poor boy,
He killed him not, but perished long ago.
So I, at least, for all their oracles,
Will never more cast glance or here, or there.
ŒDIPUS.—Thou reasonest well. Yet send a messenger
To fetch that peasant. Be not slack in this.
JOCASTA.—I will make haste. But let us now go in;
I would do nothing that displeaseth thee. [*Exeunt.*

STROPHE I.

CHORUS.—O that 'twere mine to keep
An awful purity,
In words and deeds whose laws on high are set
Through heaven's clear æther spread,
Whose birth Olympos boasts,
Their one, their only sire,
Whom man's frail flesh begat not,
Nor in forgetfulness

Shall lull to sleep of death;
In them our God is great,
In them He grows not old for evermore.

ANTISTROPHE I.

But pride begets the mood
Of wanton, tyrant power;
Pride filled with many thoughts, yet filled in vain,
Untimely, ill-advised,
Scaling the topmost height,
Falls to the abyss of woe,
Where step that profiteth
It seeks in vain to take.
I ask our God to stay
The labors never more
That work our country's good;
I will not cease to call on God for aid.

STROPHE II.

But if there be who walketh haughtily,
In action or in speech,
Whom Righteousness herself has ceased to awe,
Who shrines of Gods reveres not,
An evil fate be his,
(Fit meed for all his evil boastfulness;)
Unless he gain his gains more righteously,
And draweth back from deeds of sacrilege,
Nor lays rash hand upon the holy things,
By man inviolable:
Who now, if such things be,
Will boast that he can guard
His soul from darts of wrath?
If deeds like these are held in high repute,
What profit is't for me
To raise my choral strain?

ANTISTROPHE II.

No longer will I go in pilgrim's guise,
To yon all holy place,

Earth's central shrine, nor Abæ's temple old,
Nor to Olympia's fane,[18]
Unless these things shall stand
In sight all men, tokens clear from God.
But, O thou sovereign Ruler! if that name,
O Zeus, belongs to thee, who reign'st o'er all,
Let not this trespass hide itself from thee,
Or thine undying sway;
For now they set at nought
The worn-out oracles,
That Laios heard of old,
And king Apollo's wonted worship flags,
And all to wreck is gone
The homage due to God.

Enter Jocasta, followed by Attendants.

JOCASTA.—Princes of this our land, across my soul
There comes the thought to go from shrine to shrine
Of all the Gods, these garlands in my hand,
And waving incense; for our Œdipus
Vexes his soul too wildly with all woes,
And speaks not as a man should speak who scans
New issues by experience of the old,
But hangs on every breath that tells of fear.
And since I find that my advice avails not,
To thee, Lyceian King, Apollo, first
I come—for thou art nearest—suppliant
With these devotions, trusting thou wilt work
Some way of healing for us, free from guilt;
For now we shudder, all of us, seeing him,
The good ship's pilot, stricken down with fear.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.—May I inquire of you, O strangers, where
To find the house of Œdipus the king,
And, above all, where he is, if ye know?

[18] The central shrine is, as in 480, Delphi, where a white oval stone was supposed to be the very centre, or omphalos of the earth. At Abæ, in Phocis, was an oracle of Apollo, believed to be older than that of Delphi. In Olympia, the priests of Zeus divined from the clearness or dimness of the fire upon the altar.

CHORUS.—This is the house, and he, good sir, within,
And here stands she, the mother of his children.
MESSENGER.—Good fortune be with her and all her kin,
Being, as she is, his true and honored wife.
JOCASTA.—Like fortune be with thee, my friend. Thy speech,
So kind, deserves no less. But tell me why
Thou comest, what thou hast to ask or tell.
MESSENGER.—Good news to thee, and to thy husband, lady.
JOCASTA.—What is it, then? and who has sent thee here?
MESSENGER.—I come from Corinth, and the news I'll tell
May give thee joy. How else? Yet thou may'st grieve.
JOCASTA.—What is the news that has this twofold power?
MESSENGER.—The citizens that on the Isthmus dwell
Will make him sovereign. So the rumor ran.
JOCASTA.—What! Does old Polybos hold his own no more?
MESSENGER.—Nay, nay. Death holds him in his sepulchre.
JOCASTA.—What say'st thou? Polybos, thy king, is dead?
MESSENGER.—If I speak false, I bid you take my life.
JOCASTA.—Go, maiden, at thy topmost speed, and tell
Thy master this. Now, oracles of Gods,
Where are ye now? Long since my Œdipus
Fled, fearing lest his hand should slay the man;
And now he dies by fate, and not by him.

Enter Œdipus.

ŒDIPUS.—Mine own Jocasta, why, O dearest one,
Why hast thou sent to fetch me from the house?
JOCASTA.—List this man's tale, and, when thou hearest, see
The plight of those the God's dread oracles.
ŒDIPUS.—Who then is this, and what has he to tell?
JOCASTA.—He comes from Corinth, and he brings thee word
That Polybos thy father lives no more.
ŒDIPUS.—What say'st thou, friend? Tell me thy tale thyself.
MESSENGER.—If I must needs report the story clear,
Know well that he has gone the way of death.
ŒDIPUS.—Was it by plot, or chance of some disease?
MESSENGER.—An old man's frame a little stroke lays low.
ŒDIPUS.—By some disease, 'twould seem, he met his death?
MESSENGER.—Yes, that, and partly worn by lingering age.
ŒDIPUS.—Ha! ha! Why now, my queen, should we regard

The Pythian hearth oracular, or birds
In mid-air crying?[19] By their auguries,
I was to slay my father. And he dies,
And the grave hides him; and I find myself
Handling no sword; . . . unless for love of me
He pined away, and so I caused his death.
So Polybos is gone, and bears with him,
In Hades 'whelmed, those worthless oracles.

JOCASTA.—Did I not tell thee this long time ago?

ŒDIPUS.—Thou didst, but I was led away by fears.

JOCASTA.—Dismiss them, then, forever from thy thoughts!

ŒDIPUS.—And yet that "incest;" must I not fear that?

JOCASTA.—Why should we fear, when chance rules everything,
And foresight of the future there is none;
'Tis best to live at random, as one can.
But thou, fear not that marriage with thy mother:
Many ere now have dreamt of things like this,
But who cares least about them bears life best.

ŒDIPUS.—Right well thou speakest all things, save that she
Still lives that bore me, and I can but fear,
Seeing that she lives, although thou speakest well.

JOCASTA.—And yet great light comes from thy father's grave.

ŒDIPUS.—Great light I own; yet while she lives I fear.

MESSENGER.—Who is this woman about whom ye fear?

ŒDIPUS.—'Tis Merope, old sir, who lived with Polybos.

MESSENGER.—And what leads you to think of her with fear?

ŒDIPUS.—A fearful oracle, my friend, from God.

MESSENGER.—Can'st tell it? or must others ask in vain?

ŒDIPUS.—Most readily: for Loxias said of old
That I should with my mother wed, and then
With mine own hands should spill my father's blood.
And therefore Corinth long ago I left,
And journeyed far, right prosperously I own;—
And yet 'tis sweet to see one's parents' face.

MESSENGER.—And did this fear thy steps to exile lead?

ŒDIPUS.—I did not wish to take my father's life.

MESSENGER.—Why, then, O king, did I, with good-will come,
Not free thee from this fear that haunts thy soul?

[19] The "Pythian hearth," with special reference to the apparent failure of the Delphic oracle; "birds," to that of the auguries of Teiresias.

ŒDIPUS.—Yes, and for this thou shalt have worthy thanks.
MESSENGER.—For this, indeed, I chiefly came to thee;
That I on thy return might prosper well.
ŒDIPUS.—And yet I will not with a parent meet.
MESSENGER.—'Tis clear, my son, thou know'st not what thou dost.
ŒDIPUS.—What is't? By all the Gods, old man, speak out.
MESSENGER.—If 'tis for them thou fearest to return . . .
ŒDIPUS.—I fear lest Phœbos prove himself too true.
MESSENGER.—Is it lest thou should'st stain thy soul through them?
ŒDIPUS.—This self-same fear, old man, forever haunts me.
MESSENGER.—And know'st thou not there is no cause for fear?
ŒDIPUS.—Is there no cause if I was born their son?
MESSENGER.—None is there. Polybos was nought to thee.
ŒDIPUS.—What say'st thou? Did not Polybos beget me?
MESSENGER.—No more than he thou speak'st to; just as much.
ŒDIPUS.—How could a father's claim become as nought?
MESSENGER.—Well, neither he begat thee nor did I.
ŒDIPUS.—Why then did he acknowledge me as his?
MESSENGER.—He at my hands received thee as a gift.
ŒDIPUS.—And could he love another's child so much?
MESSENGER.—Yes; for his former childlessness wrought on him.
ŒDIPUS.—And gav'st thou me as foundling or as bought?
MESSENGER.—I found thee in Kithæron's shrub-grown hollow.
ŒDIPUS.—And for what cause didst travel thitherwards?
MESSENGER.—I had the charge to tend the mountain flocks.
ŒDIPUS.—Wast thou a shepherd, then, and seeking hire?
MESSENGER.—E'en so, my son, and so I saved thee then.
ŒDIPUS.—What evil plight then didst thou find me in?
MESSENGER.—The sinews of thy feet would tell that tale.
ŒDIPUS.—Ah, me! why speak'st thou of that ancient wrong?
MESSENGER.—I freed thee when thy insteps both were pierced.
ŒDIPUS.—A foul disgrace I had in swaddling clothes.
MESSENGER.—Thus from this chance there came the name thou bearest.
ŒDIPUS [*starting*].—Who gave the name, my father or my mother?
MESSENGER.—I know not. He who gave thee better knows.

ŒDIPUS.—Didst thou then take me from another's hand,
Not finding me thyself?
MESSENGER.— Not I, indeed;
Another shepherd made a gift of thee.
ŒDIPUS.—Who was he? Know'st thou how to point him out?
MESSENGER.—They called him one of those that Laios owned.
ŒDIPUS.—Mean'st thou the former sovereign of this land?
MESSENGER.—E'en so. He fed the flocks of him thou nam'st.
ŒDIPUS.—And is he living still that I might see him?
MESSENGER.—You, his own countrymen, should know that best.
ŒDIPUS.—Is there of you who stand and listen here
One who has known the shepherd that he tells of,
Or seeing him upon the hills or here?
If so, declare it; 'tis full time to know.
CHORUS.—I think that this is he whom from the fields
But now thou soughtest. But Jocasta here
Could tell thee this with surer word than I.
ŒDIPUS.—Think'st thou, my queen, the man whom late we sent for
Is one with him of whom this stranger speaks?
JOCASTA [*with forced calmness*].—Whom did he speak of?
Care not thou for it,
Nor even wish to keep his words in mind.
ŒDIPUS.—I cannot fail, once getting on the scent,
To track at last the secret of my birth.
JOCASTA.—Ah, by the Gods, if that thou valuest life
Inquire no more. My misery is enough.
ŒDIPUS.—Take heart; though I should prove thrice base-born slave,
Born of thrice base-born mother, thou art still
Free from all stain.
JOCASTA.— Yet, I implore thee, pause!
Yield to my counsels, do not do this deed.
ŒDIPUS.—I may not yield, nor fail to search it out.
JOCASTA.—And yet best counsels give I, for thy good.
ŒDIPUS.—What thou call'st best has long been grief to me.
JOCASTA.—May'st thou ne'er know, ill-starred one, who thou art!
ŒDIPUS.—Will someone bring that shepherd to me here?
Leave her to glory in her high descent.

JOCASTA.—Woe! woe! ill-fated one! my last word this,
This only, and no more for evermore. [*Rushes out.*
CHORUS.—Why has thy queen, O Œdipus, gone forth
In her wild sorrow rushing? Much I fear
Lest from such silence evil deeds burst out.
ŒDIPUS.—Burst out what will; I seek to know my birth,
Low though it be, and she perhaps is shamed
(For, like a woman, she is proud of heart)
At thoughts of my low birth; but I, who count
Myself the child of Fortune, fear no shame;
My mother she, and she has prospered me.
And so the months that span my life have made me
Both low and high; but whatsoe'er I be,
Such as I am I am, and needs must on
To fathom all the secret of my birth.

STROPHE.

CHORUS.—If the seer's gift be mine,
Or skill in counsel wise,
Thou, O Kithæron, by Olympos high,
When next our full moon comes,
Shalt fail not to resound
With cry that greets thee, fellow-citizen,
Mother and nurse of Œdipus
And we will on thee weave our choral dance,
As bringing to our princes glad good news.
Hail, hail! O Phœbos, grant that what we do
May meet thy favoring smile.

ANTISTROPHE.

Who was it bore thee, child,[20]
Of Nymphs whose years are long,
Or drawing near the mighty Father, Pan,
Who wanders o'er the hills,
Or Loxias' paramour,
Who loves the high lawns of the pasturing flocks?

[20] The Chorus, thinking only of the wonder of Œdipus's birth, plays with the conjecture that he is the offspring of the Gods, of Pan, the God of the hills, or Apollo, the prophet-God, or Hermes, worshipped on Kyllene in Arcadia; or Bacchos, roaming on the highest peaks of Parnassos. The Heliconian nymphs are, of course, the Muses.

Or was it He who rules
Kyllene's height; or did the Bacchic god,
Whose dwelling is upon the mountain peaks,
Receive thee, gift of Heliconian nymphs,
With whom He loves to sport?

ŒDIPUS.—If I must needs conjecture, who as yet
Ne'er met the man, I think I see the shepherd,
Whom this long while we sought for. In his age
He this man matches. And I see besides,
My servants bring him. Thou perchance can'st speak
From former knowledge yet more certainly.

CHORUS.—I know him, king, be sure; for this man stood,
If any, known as Laios' herdsman true.

Enter Shepherd.

ŒDIPUS.—Thee first I ask, Corinthian stranger, say,
Is this the man?

MESSENGER.— The very man thou seek'st.

ŒDIPUS.—Ho there! old man. Come hither, look on me,
And tell me all. Did Laios own thee once?

SHEPHERD.—His slave I was, not bought, but reared at home.

ŒDIPUS.—What was thy work, or what thy mode of life?

SHEPHERD.—Near all my life I followed with the flock.

ŒDIPUS.—And in what regions didst thou chiefly dwell?

SHEPHERD.—Now 'twas Kithæron, now on neighboring fields.

ŒDIPUS.—Know'st thou this man? Didst ever see him there?

SHEPHERD.—What did he do? Of what man speakest thou?

ŒDIPUS.—This man now present. Did ye ever meet?

SHEPHERD.—I cannot say off-hand from memory.

MESSENGER.—No wonder that, my lord. But I'll remind him
Right well of things forgotten. Well I know
He needs must know when on Kithæron's fields,
He with a double flock, and I with one,
I was his neighbor during three half years,
From springtide till Arcturos rose; and I
In winter to mine own fold drove my flocks,
And he to those of Laios. [*To Shepherd.*] Answer me,
Speak I, or speak I not, the thing that was?

SHEPHERD.—Thou speak'st the truth, although long years have passed.

MESSENGER.—Come, then, say on. Dost know thou gav'st me once
A boy, that I might rear him as my child?
SHEPHERD.—What means this? Wherefore askest thou of that?
MESSENGER.—Here stands he, fellow! that same tiny boy.
SHEPHERD.—A curse befall thee! Wilt not hold thy tongue?
ŒDIPUS.—Rebuke him not, old man; thy words need more
The language of rebuker than do his.
SHEPHERD.—Say, good my lord, what fault do I commit?
ŒDIPUS.—This, that thou tell'st not of the child he asks for.
SHEPHERD.—Yes, for he nothing knows, and wastes his pains.
ŒDIPUS.—For favor thou speak'st not, but shalt for pain. . . .
[*Strikes him.*
SHEPHERD.—By all the Gods, hurt not an old man weak.
ŒDIPUS.—Will no one bind his hands behind his back?
SHEPHERD.—Oh wretched me! And what then wilt thou learn?
ŒDIPUS.—Gav'st thou this man the boy of whom he asks?
SHEPHERD.—I gave him. Would that I that day had died.
ŒDIPUS.—Soon thou wilt come to that if thou speak'st wrong.
SHEPHERD.—Nay, much more shall I perish if I speak.
ŒDIPUS.—This fellow, as it seems, would tire us out.
SHEPHERD.—Not so. I said long since I gave it him.
ŒDIPUS.—Whence came it? Was the child thine own or not?
SHEPHERD.—Mine own 'twas not, from someone else I had it.
ŒDIPUS.—Which of our people, or from out what home?
SHEPHERD.—Oh, by the Gods, my master, ask no more!
ŒDIPUS.—Thou diest if I question this again.
SHEPHERD.—Someone it was of Laios' household born.
ŒDIPUS.—Was it a slave, or someone kin to him?
SHEPHERD.—Ah me, I stand upon the very brink
Where most I dread to speak.
ŒDIPUS.— And I to hear:
And yet I needs must hear it, come what may.
SHEPHERD.—The boy was said to be his son; but she,
Thy queen within, could tell the whole truth best.
ŒDIPUS.—What! was it she who gave it?
SHEPHERD.— Yea, O king!
ŒDIPUS.—And to what end?
SHEPHERD.— To make away with it.
ŒDIPUS.—And dared a mother . . .?

SHEPHERD.— Auguries dark she feared.
ŒDIPUS.—What were they?
SHEPHERD.— E'en that he his sire should kill.
ŒDIPUS.—Why then didst thou to this old man resign him?
SHEPHERD.—I pitied him, O master, and I thought
That he would bear him to another land,
Whence he himself had come. But him he saved
For direst evil. For if thou be he
Whom this man speaks of, thou art evil-starred.
ŒDIPUS.—Woe! woe! woe! woe! all cometh clear at last.
O light, may this my last glance be on thee,
Who now am seen owing my birth to those
To whom I ought not, and with whom I ought not
In wedlock living, whom I ought not slaying. [*Exit.*

STROPHE I.

CHORUS.—Ah, race of mortal men,
How as a thing of nought
I count ye, though ye live;
For who is there of men
That more of blessing knows,
Than just a little while
To seem to prosper well,
And, having seemed, to fall?
With thee as pattern giving,
Thy destiny, e'en thine,
Ill-fated Œdipus,
I count nought human blest.

ANTISTROPHE I.

For he, with wondrous skill,
Taking his aim, did hit
Success, in all things blest;
And did, O Zeus! destroy
The Virgin with claws bent,
And sayings wild and dark;
And against many deaths
A tower and strong defence
Did for my country rise:

And so thou king art named,
With highest glory crowned,
Ruling in mighty Thebes.

STROPHE II.

And now, who lives than thou more miserable?
Who equals thee in wild woes manifold,
In shifting turns of life?
Ah, noble one, our Œdipus!
For whom the same wide harbor
Sufficed for sire and son,
In marriage rites to enter:
Ah how, ah, wretched one,
How could thy father's bed
Receive thee, and so long,
Even till now, be dumb?

ANTISTROPHE II.

Time, who sees all things, he hath found thee out,
Against thy will, and long ago condemned
The wedlock none may wed,
Begetter and begotten.
Ah, child of Laios! would
I ne'er had seen thy face!
I mourn with wailing lips,
Mourn sore exceedingly.
'Tis simplest truth to say,
By thee from death I rose,
By thee in death I sleep.

Enter Second Messenger.

SECOND MESSENGER.—Ye chieftains, honored most in this our land,
What deeds ye now will hear of, what will see,
How great a wailing will ye raise, if still
Ye truly love the house of Labdacos!
For sure I think that neither Istros' stream
Nor Phasis' floods could purify this house,[21]

[21] Istros as the great river of Europe, Phasis of Asia.

Such horrors does it hold. But soon 'twill show
Evils self-chosen, not without free choice:
These self-sought sorrows ever pain men most.

CHORUS.—The ills we knew before lacked nothing meet
For plaint and moaning. Now, what add'st thou more?

SECOND MESSENGER.—Quickest for me to speak, and thee to learn;
Our sacred queen Jocasta—she is dead.

CHORUS.—Ah, crushed with many sorrows! How and why?

SECOND MESSENGER.—Herself she slew. The worst of all that passed
I must omit, for none were there to see.
Yet, far as memory suffers me to speak,
That sorrow-stricken woman's end I'll tell;
For when to passion yielding, on she passed
Within the porch, straight to the couch she rushed,
Her bridal bed, with both hands tore her hair,
And as she entered, dashing through the doors,
Calls on her Laios, dead long years ago,
Remembering that embrace of long ago,
Which brought him death, and left to her who bore,
With his own son a hateful motherhood.
And o'er her bed she wailed, where she had borne
Spouse to her spouse, and children to her child;
And how she perished after this I know not;
For Œdipus struck in with woful cry,
And we no longer looked upon her fate,
But gazed on him as to and fro he rushed.
For so he raves, and asks us for a sword,
Wherewith to smite the wife that wife was none,
The womb polluted with accursed births,
Himself, his children—so, as thus he raves,
Some spirit shows her to him (none of us
Who stood hard by had done so): with a shout
Most terrible, as someone led him on,
Through the two gates he leapt, and from the wards
He slid the hollow bolt, and rushes in;
And there we saw his wife had hung herself,
By twisted cords suspended. When her form
He saw, poor wretch! with one wild, fearful cry,

The twisted rope he loosens, and she fell,
Ill-starred one, on the ground. Then came a sight
Most fearful. Tearing from her robe the clasps,
All chased with gold, with which she decked herself,
He with them struck the pupils of his eyes,
With words like these—" Because they had not seen
What ills he suffered and what ills he did,
They in the dark should look, in time to come,
On those whom they ought never to have seen,
Nor know the dear ones whom he fain had known."
With such like wails, not once or twice alone,
Raising his eyes, he smote them, and the balls,
All bleeding, stained his cheek, nor poured they forth
Gore drops slow trickling, but the purple shower
Fell fast and full, a pelting storm of blood.
Such were the ills that sprang from both of them,
Not on one only, wife and husband both.
His ancient fortune, which he held of old,
Was truly fortune; but for this day's doom
Wailing and woe, and death and shame, all forms
That man can name of evil, none have failed.

CHORUS.—What rest from suffering hath the poor wretch now?

SECOND MESSENGER.—He calls to us to ope the bolts, and show
To all in Thebes his father's murderer,
His mother's . . . Foul and fearful were the words
He spoke; I dare not speak them. Then he said
That he would cast himself adrift, nor stay
At home accursèd, as himself had cursed.
Some stay he surely needs, or guiding hand,
For greater is the ill than he can bear,
And this he soon will show thee, for the bolts
Of the two gates are opening, and thou'lt see
A sight to touch e'en hatred's self with pity.

[*The doors of the Palace are thrown open, and Œdipus is seen within.*]

CHORUS.—Oh, fearful sight for men to look upon!
Most fearful of all woes
I hitherto have known! What madness strange
Has come on thee, thou wretched one?

What Power with one fell swoop,
Ills heaping upon ills,
Than greatest greater yet,
Has marked thee for its prey?
Woe! woe! thou doomed one, wishing much to ask,
And much to learn, and much to gaze into,
I cannot look on thee,
So horrible the sight!

ŒDIPUS.—Ah, woe! ah, woe! ah, woe!
Woe for my misery!
Where am I wandering in my utter woe?
Where floats my voice in air?
Dread Power, with crushing might
Thou leaped'st on my head.

CHORUS.—Yea, with dread doom nor sight nor speech may bear.

ŒDIPUS.—O cloud of darkness, causing one to shrink,
That onward sweeps with dread ineffable,
Resistless, borne along by evil blast,
Woe, woe, and woe again!
How through me darts the throb these clasps have caused,
And memory of my ills.

CHORUS.—And who can wonder that in such dire woes
Thou mournest doubly, bearing twofold ills?

ŒDIPUS.—Ah, friend,
Thou only keepest by me, faithful found,
Nor dost the blind one slight.
Woe, woe,
For thou escap'st me not; I clearly know,
Though all is dark, at least that voice of thine.

CHORUS.—O man of fearful deeds, how could'st thou bear
Thine eyes to outrage? What power stirred thee to it?

ŒDIPUS.—Apollo, oh, my friends, the god, Apollo,
Who worketh out all these, my bitter woes;
Yet no man's hand but mine has smitten them.
What need for me to see,
When nothing's left that's sweet to look upon?

CHORUS.—Too truly dost thou speak the thing that is.

ŒDIPUS.—Yea, what remains to see,
Or what to love, or hear,
With any touch of joy?

Lead me away, my friends, with utmost speed.
Lead me away, the foul polluted one,
Of all men most accursed,
Most hateful to the gods.

CHORUS.—Ah, wretched one, alike in soul and doom,
I fain could wish that I had never known thee.

ŒDIPUS.—Ill fate be his who from the fetters freed
The child upon the hills,
And rescued me from death,
And saved me—thankless boon!
Ah! had I died but then,
Nor to my friends nor me had been such woe.

CHORUS.—I, too, could fain wish that.

ŒDIPUS.—Yes; then I had not been
My father's murderer:
Nor had men pointed to me as the man
Wedded with her who bore him.
But now all godless, born of impious stock,
In incest joined with her who gave me birth;—
Yea, if there be an evil worse than all,
It falls on Œdipus!

CHORUS.—I may not say that thou art well-advised,
For better wert thou dead than living blind.

ŒDIPUS.—Persuade me not, nor counsel give to show
That what I did was not the best to do.
I know not with what eyes, in Hades dark,
To look on mine own father or my mother,
When I against them both, alas! have done
Deeds for which strangling were too light a doom.
My children's face, forsooth, was sweet to see,
Their birth being what it was; nay, nay, not so
To these mine eyes, nor yet this, nor tower,
Nor sacred shrines of gods whence I, who stood
Most honored one in Thebes, myself have banished,
Commanding all to thrust the godless forth,
Him whom the gods do show accursed, the stock
Of Laios old. And could I dare to look,
Such dire pollution fixing on myself,
And meet these face to face? Not so, not so.
Yea, if I could but stop the stream of sound,

And dam mine ears against it, I would do it,
Sealing my carcase vile, that I might live
Both blind, and hearing nothing. Sweet 'twould be
To keep my soul beyond the reach of ills
Why, O Kithæron, didst thou shelter me,
Nor kill me out of hand? I had not shown,
In that case, all men whence I drew my birth.
O Polybos, and Corinth, and the home
Of old called mine, how strange a growth ye reared,
All fair outside, all rotten at the core;
For vile I stand, descended from the vile.
Ye threefold roads and thickets half concealed,
The copse, the narrow pass where three ways meet,
Which at my hands did drink my father's blood,
Remember ye, what deeds I did in you,
What, hither come, I did?—O marriage rites
That gave me birth, and, having borne me, gave
To me in turn an offspring, and ye showed
Fathers, and sons, and brothers, all in one,
Mothers, and wives, and daughters, hateful names,
All foulest deeds that men have ever done.
But, since, where deeds are evil, speech is wrong,
With utmost speed, by all the gods, or slay me,
Or drive me forth, or hide me in the sea,
Where never more your eyes may look on me.
Come, scorn ye not to touch a wretch like me,
But hearken; fear ye not; no soul save me
Can bear the burden of my countless ills.
But ye, if ye have lost your sense of shame
For mortal men, yet reverence the light
Of him, our king, the Sun-God, source of life,
Nor sight so foul expose unveiled to view,
Which neither earth, nor shower from heaven, nor light,
Can see and welcome. But with utmost speed
Convey me in; for nearest kin alone
Can meetly see and hear their kindred's ills.[22]

CHORUS.—The man for what thou need'st is come in time,
Creon, to counsel, and to act, for now
He in thy stead is left our state's one guide.

[22] The two sons of Œdipus, Polyneikes and Eteocles, the Chorus thinks of as too young to reign.

ŒDIPUS.—Ah, me! what language shall I hold to him,
What trust at his hands claim? In all the past
I showed myself to him most vile and base.

Enter Creon.

CREON.—I have not come, O Œdipus, to scorn,
Nor to reproach thee for thy former crimes.
ŒDIPUS.—Oh, by the gods! since thou, beyond my hopes,
Dost come all noble unto me all base,
One favor grant. I seek thy good, not mine.
CREON.—And what request seek'st thou so wistfully?
ŒDIPUS.—Cast me with all thy speed from out this land,
Where nevermore a man may speak to me!
CREON.—Be sure, I would have done so, but I wished
To learn what now the god will bid us do.
ŒDIPUS.—The oracle was surely clear enough
That I the parricide, the pest, should die.
CREON.—So ran the words. But in our present need
'Tis better to learn surely what to do.
ŒDIPUS.—And will ye ask for one so vile as I?
CREON.—Yea, thou, too, now would'st trust the voice of God.
ŒDIPUS.—And this I charge thee, yea, and supplicate;
For her within, provide what tomb thou wilt,
For for thine own most meetly thou wilt care;
But never let this city of my fathers
Be sentenced to receive me as its guest;
But suffer me on yon lone hills to dwell,
On my Kithæron, destined for my tomb,
While still I lived, by mother and by sire,
That I may die by those who sought to kill.
And yet this much I know, that no disease,
Nor aught else could have killed me; ne'er from death
Had I been saved but for some evil dread.
As for our fate, let it go where it will;
But for my children, of my boys, O Creon,
Take thou no thought; as men they will not feel,
Where'er they be, the lack of means to live.
But for my two poor girls, all desolate,
To whom my table never brought a meal
Without my presence, but whate'er I touched

They still partook of with me; care for these;
Yea, let me touch them with my hands, and weep
With them my sorrows. Grant it, O my prince,
O born of noble nature!
Could I but touch them with my hands, I feel
Still I should have them mine, as when I saw.

Enter Antigone and Ismene.

What say I? What is this?
Do I not hear, ye gods, their dear, loved tones,
Broken with sobs, and Creon, pitying me,
Hath sent the dearest of my children to me?
Is it not so?

CREON.—It is so. I am he who gives thee this,
Knowing the joy thou had'st in them of old.

ŒDIPUS.—A blessing on thee! May the Powers on high
Guard thy path better than they guarded mine!
Where are ye, O my children? Come, oh, come
To these your brother's hands, that now have brought
Your father's once bright eyes to this fell pass,
Who, O my children, blind and knowing nought,
Became your father e'en by her who bore me.
I weep for you (for sight is mine no more,)
Picturing in mind the sad and dreary life
Which waits you at men's hands in years to come;
For to what friendly gatherings will ye go,
Or solemn feasts, from whence, for all the joy
And pride, ye shall not home return in tears?
And when ye come to marriageable age,
Who is there, O my children, rash enough
To make his own the shame that then will fall,
Reproaches on my parents, and on yours?
What evil fails us here? Your father killed
His father, and was wed in incest foul
With her who bore him, and you twain begat
Of her who gave him birth. Such shame as this
Will men lay on you, and who then will dare
To make you his in marriage? None, not one,
My children! but ye needs must waste away,
Unwedded, childless. Thou, Menœkeus' son,

Since thou alone art left a father to them,
(For we their parents perish utterly,)
Suffer them not to wander husbandless,
Nor let thy kindred beg their daily bread,
Nor make them sharers with me in my woe;
But look on them with pity, seeing them
At their age, but for thee, deprived of all.
O noble soul, I pray thee, touch my hand
In token of consent. And ye, my girls,
Had ye the minds to hearken I would fain
Give ye much counsel. As it is, pray for me
To live where'er is meet; and for yourselves
A brighter life than his ye call your sire.

CREON.—Enough of tears. Go thou within the house.

ŒDIPUS.—I needs must yield, however hard it be.

CREON.—In their right season all things prosper best.

ŒDIPUS.—Know'st thou my wish?

CREON.— Speak and I then shall know.

ŒDIPUS.—That thou should'st send me far away from home.

CREON.—Thou askest what the gods alone can give.

ŒDIPUS.—As for the gods, above all men they hate me.

CREON.—And therefore it may chance thou gain'st thy wish.

ŒDIPUS.—And dost thou promise?

CREON.— When I mean them not,
I am not wont to utter idle words.

ŒDIPUS.—Lead me, then, hence.

CREON.— Go thou, but leave the girls.

ŒDIPUS.—Ah, take them not from me!

CREON.— Thou must not think
To hold the sway in all things all thy life:
The sway thou had'st did not abide with thee.

CHORUS.—Ye men of Thebes, behold this Œdipus,
Who knew the famous riddle and was noblest,
Whose fortune who saw not with envious glances?
And, lo! in what a sea of direst trouble
He now is plunged. From hence the lesson learn ye,
To reckon no man happy till ye witness
The closing day; until he pass the border
Which severs life from death, unscathed by sorrow.

CHOICE EXAMPLES OF EARLY PRINTING AND ENGRAVING.

Fac-similes from Rare and Curious Books.

PAGE FROM THE ALDINE ARISTOTLE.

Before the Renaissance Aristotle was known to the learned world only through a Latin translation from an Arabic version. The edition printed by Aldus in 1495, which introduced the Greek text to Europe, shows the Greek type, imitated from running handwriting, in which ligatures or contractions abound. The margins and capitals are designed in a faint and delicate line-work, which throws into relief the Greek lettering, and adds an unmistakable charm to the page.

ΠΟΡΦΥΡΙΟΥ ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ.

ΑΝΤΟΣ Ἀναγκαίως Χρυσαόριε καὶ εἰς τὴν τοῦ παρὰ Ἀριστοτέλει κατηγοριῶν διδασκαλίαν, τοῦ γνῶναι τὸ γένος καὶ τὴν διαφοράν· τί τε εἶδος· καὶ τὸ ἴδιον· καὶ τὸ συμβεβηκός· εἰσὶ τοίνυν τῶν ὁρισμῶν ἀποδόσεις, καὶ ὅλως εἰς τὸ περὶ διαιρέσεως καὶ ἀποδείξεως χρησίμους ὕλας τῆς τούτων θεωρίας, σωζόντων μόνων παραδόσιν ποιούμενος, πειράσομαι διὰ βραχέων ὡς περ ἐν εἰσαγωγῆς τρόπῳ, τὰ παρὰ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις εἰρημένα· τῷ μὲν μαθητέρῳ ἀπεχόμενος ζητημάτων· τῷ δὲ ἁπλουστέρως συμμίξως σοχαζόμενος. Ἀντίκα περὶ γένους τε καὶ εἴδους, ὑπομνήσω, εἴτε ὑφεστηκέναι, εἴτε καὶ ἐν μόναις ψιλαῖς ἐπινοίαις κεῖσθαι, εἴτε καὶ ὑφεστηκότα σώματά ἐστιν, ἢ ἀσώματα· καὶ πότερα χωριστά, ἢ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς· καὶ περὶ ταῦτα ὑφιστῶτα, παραπήσομαι λέγειν· βαθυτάτης οὔσης τῆς τοιαύτης πραγματείας, καὶ ἄλλου μείζονος δεομένης ὑποστάσεως· τὸ δ' ὅπως περὶ αὐτῶν τε καὶ τῶν προκειμένων λογικώτερον οἱ παλαιοὶ διέλαβον, καὶ τούτων μάλιστα οἱ ἐκ τοῦ περιπάτου, πειράσομαι δηλοῦν.

ΠΕΡΙ ΓΕΝΟΥΣ.

Ἔστι δὲ μήτε τὸ γένος, μήτε τὸ εἶδος ἁπλῶς λέγεσθαι· γένος γὰρ λέγεται καὶ ἡ τινῶν ἐχόντων πως πρὸς ἕνα τι πρὸς ἄλληλους ἄθροισις, καθ' ὃ σημαινόμενον, τὸ ἡρακλειδῶν λέγεται γένος, ἐκ τῆς ἀφ' ἑνὸς χύσεως, λέγω δὲ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους, ἢ

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MEDEA

—

BY

EURIPIDES

[*Metrical Translation by Michael Wodhull*]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MEDEA.
CREON.
JASON.
ÆGEUS.
MESSENGER.
The Two Sons of Jason and Medea.
Attendant on the Children.
Nurse of Medea.
Chorus of Corinthian Women.

The action of the drama takes place before the palace of Creon at Corinth.

MEDEA

SCENE.—BEFORE THE PALACE

NURSE.—Ah! would to heaven the Argo ne'er had urged
Its rapid voyage to the Colchian strand
'Twixt the Cyanean rocks, nor had the pine
Been fell in Pelion's forests, nor the hands
Of those illustrious chiefs, who that famed bark
Ascended to obtain, the golden fleece
For royal Pelias, plied the stubborn oar;
So to Iolchos' turrets had my Queen
Medea never sailed, her soul with love
For Jason smitten, nor, as since her arts
Prevailed on Pelias' daughters to destroy
Their father, in this realm of Corinth dwelt
An exile with her husband and her sons;
Thus to the citizens whose land received her
Had she grown pleasing, and in all his schemes
Assisted Jason: to the wedded pair,
Hence bliss supreme arises, when the bond
Of concord joins them: now their souls are filled
With ruthless hates, and all affection's lost:
For false to his own sons, and her I serve,
With a new consort of imperial birth
Sleeps the perfidious Jason, to the daughter
Of Creon wedded, lord of these domains.
The wretched scorned Medea oft exclaims,
"O by those oaths, by that right hand thou gav'st
The pledge of faith!" She then invokes the gods
To witness what requital she hath found
From Jason. On a couch she lies, no food

Receiving, her whole frame subdued by grief;
And since she marked the treachery of her lord
Melts into tears incessant, from the ground
Her eyes she never raises, never turns
Her face aside, but steadfast as a rock,
Or as the ocean's rising billows, hears
The counsels of her friends, save when she weeps
In silent anguish, with her snowy neck
Averted, for her sire, her native land,
And home, which she forsaking hither came
With him who scorns her now. She from her woes
Too late hath learnt how enviable the lot
Of those who leave not their paternal roof.
She even hates her children, nor with joy
Beholds them: much I dread lest she contrive
Some enterprise unheard of, for her soul
Is vehement, nor will she tamely brook
Injurious treatment; well, full well I know
Her temper, which alarms me, lest she steal
Into their chamber, where the genial couch
Is spread, and with the sword their vitals pierce,
Or to the slaughter of the bridegroom add
That of the monarch, and in some mischance,
Yet more severe than death, herself involve:
For dreadful is her wrath, nor will the object
Of her aversion gain an easy triumph.
But lo, returning from the race, her sons
Draw near: they think not of their mother's woes,
For youthful souls are strangers to affliction.

Enter Attendant, with the Sons of Jason and Medea.

ATTENDANT.—O thou, who for a length of time hast dwelt
Beneath the roofs of that illustrious dame
I serve, why stand'st thou at these gates alone
Repeating to thyself a doleful tale:
Or wherefore by Medea from her presence
Art thou dismissed?

NURSE.— Old man, O you who tend
On Jason's sons, to faithful servants aught

Of evil fortune that befalls their lords
Is a calamity: but such a pitch
Of grief am I arrived at, that I felt
An impulse which constrained me to come forth
From these abodes, and to the conscious earth
And heaven proclaim the lost Medea's fate.

ATTENDANT.—Cease not the plaints of that unhappy dame?

NURSE.—Your ignorance I envy: for her woes
Are but beginning, nor have yet attained
Their mid career.

ATTENDANT.— O how devoid of reason,
If we with terms thus harsh may brand our lords,
Of ills more recent nothing yet she knows.

NURSE.—Old man, what mean you? Scruple not to speak.

ATTENDANT.—Nought. What I have already said repents me.

NURSE.—I by that beard conjure you not to hide
The secret from your faithful fellow-servant.
For I the strictest silence will observe
If it be needful.

ATTENDANT.— Someone I o'erheard
(Appearing not to listen, as I came
Where aged men sit near Pirene's fount
And hurl their dice) say that from Corinth's land
Creon, the lord of these domains, will banish
The children with their mother; but I know not
Whether th' intelligence be true, and wish
It may prove otherwise.

NURSE.— Will Jason brook
Such an injurious treatment of his sons,
Although he be at variance with their mother?

ATTENDANT.—By new connections are all former ties
Dissolved, and he no longer is a friend
To this neglected race.

NURSE.— We shall be plunged
In utter ruin, if to our old woes,
Yet unexhausted, any fresh we add.

ATTENDANT.—Be silent, and suppress the dismal tale,
For 'tis unfit our royal mistress know.

NURSE.—Hear, O ye children, how your father's soul
Is turned against you: still, that he may perish

I do not pray, because he is my lord;
Yet treacherous to his friends hath he been found.

ATTENDANT.—Who is not treacherous? Hast thou lived so long
Without discerning how self-love prevails
O'er social? Some by glory, some by gain,
Are prompted. Then what wonder, for the sake
Of a new consort, if the father slight
These children?

NURSE.— Go, all will be well, go in.
Keep them as far as possible away,
Nor suffer them to come into the presence
Of their afflicted mother; for her eyes
Have I just seen with wild distraction fired,
As if some horrid purpose against them
She meant to execute; her wrath I know
Will not be pacified, till on some victim
It like a thunderbolt from Heaven descends;
May she assail her foes alone, nor aim
The stroke at those she ought to hold most dear.

MEDEA [*within*].—Ah me! how grievous are my woes! What means
Can I devise to end this hated life?

NURSE.—'Tis as I said: strong agitations seize
Your mother's heart, her choler's raised. Dear children,
Beneath these roofs hie instantly, nor come
Into her sight, accost her not, beware
Of these ferocious manners and the rage
Which boils in that ungovernable spirit.
Go with the utmost speed, for I perceive
Too clearly that her plaints, which in thick clouds
Arise at first, will kindle ere 'tis long
With tenfold violence. What deeds of horror
From that high-soaring, that remorseless soul,
May we expect, when goaded by despair!

[*Exeunt Attendant and Sons.*

MEDEA [*within*].—I have endured, alas! I have endured—
Wretch that I am!—such agonies as call
For loudest plaints. Ye execrable sons
Of a devoted mother, perish ye
With your false sire, and perish his whole house!

NURSE.—Why should the sons—ah, wretched me!—partake
Their father's guilt? Why hat'st thou them? Ah me!
How greatly, O ye children, do I fear
Lest mischief should befall you: for the souls
Of kings are prone to cruelty, so seldom
Subdued, and over others wont to rule,
That it is difficult for such to change
Their angry purpose. Happier I esteem
The lot of those who still are wont to live
Among their equals. May I thus grow old,
If not in splendor, yet with safety blest!
For first of all, renown attends the name
Of mediocrity, and to mankind
Such station is more useful: but not long
Can the extremes of grandeur ever last;
And heavier are the curses which it brings
When Fortune visits us in all her wrath.

CHORUS.—The voice of Colchos' hapless dame I heard—
A clamorous voice, nor yet is she appeased.
Speak, O thou aged matron, for her cries
I from the innermost apartment heard;
Nor can I triumph in the woes with which
This house is visited; for to my soul
Dear are its interests.

NURSE.— This whole house is plunged
In ruin, and its interests are no more.
While Corinth's palace to our lord affords
A residence, within her chamber pines
My mistress, and the counsels of her friends
Afford no comfort to her tortured soul.

MEDEA [*within*].—O that a flaming thunderbolt from Heaven
Would pierce this brain! for what can longer life
To me avail? Fain would I seek repose
In death, and cast away this hated being.

CHORUS.—Heard'st thou, all-righteous Jove, thou fostering earth,
And thou, O radiant lamp of day, what plaints,
What clamorous plaints this miserable wife
Hath uttered? Through insatiable desire,
Ah why would you precipitate your death?

O most unwise! These imprecations spare.
What if your lord's affections are engaged
By a new bride, reproach him not, for Jove
Will be the dread avenger of your wrongs;
Nor melt away with unavailing grief,
Weeping for the lost partner of your bed.

MEDEA [*within*].—Great Themis and Diana, awful queen,
Do ye behold the insults I endure,
Though by each oath most holy I have bound
That execrable husband. May I see
Him and his bride, torn limb from limb, bestrew
The palace; me have they presumed to wrong,
Although I ne'er provoked them. O my sire,
And thou my native land, whence I with shame
Departed when my brother I had slain.

NURSE.—Heard ye not all she said, with a loud voice
Invoking Themis, who fulfils the vow,
And Jove, to whom the tribes of men look up
As guardian of their oaths. Medea's rage
Can by no trivial vengeance be appeased.

CHORUS.—Could we but draw her hither, and prevail
On her to hear the counsels we suggest,
Then haply might she check that bitter wrath,
That vehemence of temper; for my zeal
Shall not be spared to aid my friends. But go,
And say, "O hasten, ere to those within
Thou do some mischief, for these sorrows rush
With an impetuous tempest on thy soul."

NURSE.—This will I do; though there is cause to fear
That on my mistress I shall ne'er prevail:
Yet I my labor gladly will bestow.
Though such a look she on her servants casts
As the ferocious lioness who guards
Her tender young, when anyone draws near
To speak to her. Thou would'st not judge amiss,
In charging folly and a total want
Of wisdom on the men of ancient days,
Who for their festivals invented hymns,
And to the banquet and the genial board
Confined those accents which o'er human life

Diffuse ecstatic pleasures: but no artist
Hath yet discovered, by the tuneful song,
And varied modulations of the lyre,
How we those piercing sorrows may assuage
Whence slaughters and such horrid mischiefs spring
As many a prosperous mansion have o'erthrown.
Could music interpose her healing aid
In these inveterate maladies, such gift
Had been the first of blessings to mankind:
But, 'midst choice viands and the circling bowl,
Why should those minstrels strain their useless throats?
To cheer the drooping heart, convivial joys
Are in themselves sufficient. [*Exit Nurse.*

CHORUS.— Mingled groans
And lamentations burst upon mine ear:
She in the bitterness of soul exclaims
Against her impious husband, who betrayed
His plighted faith. By grievous wrongs opprest,
She the vindictive gods invokes, and Themis,
Jove's daughter, guardian of the sacred oath,
Who o'er the waves to Greece benignly steered
Their bark adventurous, launched in midnight gloom,
Through ocean's gates which never can be closed!

Enter Medea.

MEDEA.—From my apartment, ye Corinthian dames,
Lest ye my conduct censure, I come forth:
For I have known full many who obtained
Fame and high rank; some to the public gaze
Stood ever forth, while others, in a sphere
More distant, chose their merits to display:
Nor yet a few, who, studious of repose,
Have with malignant obloquy been called
Devoid of spirit: for no human eyes
Can form a just discernment; at one glance,
Before the inmost secrets of the heart
Are clearly known, a bitter hate 'gainst him
Who never wronged us they too oft inspire.
But 'tis a stranger's duty to adopt

The manners of the land in which he dwells;
Nor can I praise that native, led astray
By mere perverseness and o'erweening folly,
Who bitter enmity incurs from those
Of his own city. But, alas! my friends,
This unforeseen calamity hath withered
The vigor of my soul. I am undone,
Bereft of every joy that life can yield,
And therefore wish to die. For as to him,
My husband, whom it did import me most
To have a thorough knowledge of, he proves
The worst of men. But sure among all those
Who have with breath and reason been endued,
We women are the most unhappy race.
First, with abundant gold are we constrained
To buy a husband, and in him receive
A haughty master. Still doth there remain
One mischief than this mischief yet more grievous,
The hazard whether we procure a mate
Worthless or virtuous: for divorces bring
Reproach to woman, nor must she renounce
The man she wedded; as for her who comes
Where usages and edicts, which at home
She learnt not, are established, she the gift
Of divination needs to teach her how
A husband must be chosen: if aright
These duties we perform, and he the yoke
Of wedlock with complacency sustains,
Ours is a happy life; but if we fail
In this great object, better 'twere to die.
For, when afflicted by domestic ills,
A man goes forth, his choler to appease,
And to some friend or comrade can reveal
What he endures; but we to him alone
For succor must look up. They still contend
That we, at home remaining, lead a life
Exempt from danger, while they launch the spear:
False are these judgments; rather would I thrice,
Armed with a target, in th' embattled field
Maintain my stand, than suffer once the throes

Of childbirth. But this language suits not you:
This is your native city, the abode
Of your loved parents, every comfort life
Can furnish is at hand, and with your friends
You here converse: but I, forlorn, and left
Without a home, am by that husband scorned
Who carried me from a Barbarian realm.
Nor mother, brother, or relation now
Have I, to whom I 'midst these storms of woe,
Like an auspicious haven, can repair.
Thus far I therefore crave ye will espouse
My interests, as if haply any means
Or any stratagem can be devised
For me with justice to avenge these wrongs
On my perfidious husband, on the king
Who to that husband's arms his daughter gave,
And the new-wedded princess; to observe
Strict silence. For although at other times
A woman, filled with terror, is unfit
For battle, or to face the lifted sword,
She when her soul by marriage wrongs is fired,
Thirsts with a rage unparalleled for blood.

CHORUS.—The silence you request I will observe,
For justly on your lord may you inflict
Severest vengeance: still I wonder not
If your disastrous fortunes you bewail:
But Creon I behold who wields the sceptre
Of these domains; the monarch hither comes
His fresh resolves in person to declare.

Enter Creon.

CREON.—Thee, O Medea, who, beneath those looks
Stern and forbidding, harbor'st 'gainst thy lord
Resentment, I command to leave these realms
An exile; for companions of thy flight
Take both thy children with thee, nor delay.
Myself pronounce this edict: I my home
Will not revisit, from the utmost bounds
Of this domain, till I have cast thee forth.

MEDEA.—Ah, wretched me! I utterly am ruined:
For in the swift pursuit, my ruthless foes,
Each cable loosing, have unfurled their sails,
Nor can I land on any friendly shore
To save myself, yet am resolved to speak,
Though punishment impend. What cause, O Creon,
Have you for banishing me?
CREON.— Thee I dread
(No longer is it needful to disguise
My thoughts) lest 'gainst my daughter thou contrive
Some evil such as medicine cannot reach.
Full many incidents conspire to raise
This apprehension: with a deep-laid craft
Art thou endued, expert in the device
Of mischiefs numberless, thou also griev'st
Since thou art severed from thy husband's bed.
I am informed, too, thou hast menaced vengeance
'Gainst me, because my daughter I bestowed
In marriage, and the bridegroom, and his bride.
Against these threats I therefore ought to guard
Before they take effect; and better far
Is it for me, O woman, to incur
Thy hatred now, than, soothed by thy mild words,
Hereafter my forbearance to bewail.
MEDEA.—Not now, alas! for the first time, but oft
To me, O Creon, hath opinion proved
Most baleful, and the source of grievous woes.
Nor ever ought the man, who is possest
Of a sound judgment, to train up his children
To be too wise: for they who live exempt
From war and all its toils, the odious name
Among their fellow-citizens acquire
Of abject sluggards. If to the unwise
You some fresh doctrine broach, you are esteemed
Not sapient, but a trifler: when to those
Who in their own conceit possess each branch
Of knowledge, you in state affairs obtain
Superior fame, to them you grow obnoxious.
I also feel the grievance I lament;
Some envy my attainments, others think

My temper uncomplying, though my wisdom
Is not transcendent. But from me it seems
You apprehend some violence; dismiss
Those fears; my situation now is such,
O Creon, that to monarchs I can give
No umbrage: and in what respect have you
Treated me with injustice? You bestowed
Your daughter where your inclination led.
Though I abhor my husband, I suppose
That you have acted wisely, nor repine
At your prosperity. Conclude the match;
Be happy: but allow me in this land
Yet to reside; for I my wrongs will bear
In silence, and to my superiors yield.

CREON.—Soft is the sound of thy persuasive words,
But in my soul I feel the strongest dread
Lest thou devise some mischief, and now less
Than ever can I trust thee; for 'gainst those
Of hasty tempers with more ease we guard,
Or men or women, than the silent foe
Who acts with prudence. Therefore be thou gone
With speed, no answer make: it is decreed,
Nor hast thou art sufficient to avert
Thy doom of banishment; for well aware
Am I thou hat'st me.

MEDEA.— Spare me, by those knees
And your new-wedded daughter, I implore.

CREON.—Lavish of words, thou never shalt persuade me.

MEDEA.—Will you then drive me hence, and to my prayers
No reverence yield?

CREON.— I do not love thee more
Than those of my own house.

MEDEA.— With what regret
Do I remember thee, my native land!

CREON.—Except my children, I hold nought so dear.

MEDEA.—To mortals what a dreadful scourge is love!

CREON.—As fortune dictates, love becomes, I ween,
Either a curse or blessing.

MEDEA.— Righteous Jove,
Let not the author of my woes escape thee.

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CREON.—Away, vain woman, free me from my cares.
MEDEA.—No lack of cares have I.
CREON.— Thou from this spot
Shalt by my servants' hands ere long be torn.
MEDEA.—Not thus, O Creon, I your mercy crave.
CREON.—To trouble me, it seems, thou art resolved.
MEDEA.—I will depart, nor urge this fond request.
CREON.—Why dost thou struggle then, nor from our realm
Withdraw thyself?
MEDEA.— Allow me this one day
Here to remain, till my maturer thoughts
Instruct me to what region I can fly,
Where for my sons find shelter, since their sire
Attends not to the welfare of his race.
Take pity on them, for you also know
What 'tis to be a parent, and must feel
Parental love: as for myself, I heed not
The being doomed to exile, but lament
Their hapless fortunes.
CREON.— No tyrannic rage
Within this bosom dwells, but pity oft
Hath warped my better judgment, and though now
My error I perceive, shall thy bequest
Be granted. Yet of this must I forewarn thee:
If when to-morrow with his orient beams
Phœbos the world revisits, he shall view
Thee and thy children still within the bounds
Of these domains, thou certainly shalt die—
Th' irrevocable sentence is pronounced.
But if thou needs must tarry, tarry here
This single day, for in so short a space
Thou canst not execute the ills I dread. [*Exit Creon.*
CHORUS.—Alas! thou wretched woman, overpowered
By thy afflictions, whither wilt thou turn?
What hospitable board, what mansion, find,
Or country to protect thee from these ills?
Into what storms of misery have the gods
Caused thee to rush!
MEDEA.— On every side distress
Assails me: who can contradict this truth?

Yet think not that my sorrows thus shall end.
By yon new-wedded pair must be sustained
Dire conflicts, and no light or trivial woes
By them who in affinity are joined
With this devoted house. Can ye suppose
That I would e'er have soothed him, had no gain
Or stratagem induced me? Else to him
Never would I have spoken, nor once raised
My suppliant hands. But now is he so lost
In folly, that, when all my schemes with ease
He might have baffled, if he from this land
Had cast me forth, he grants me to remain
For this one day, and ere the setting sun
Three of my foes will I destroy—the sire,
The daughter, and my husband: various means
Have I of slaying them, and, O my friends,
Am at a loss to fix on which I first
Shall undertake, or to consume with flames
The bridal mansion, or a dagger plunge
Into their bosoms, entering unperceived
The chamber where they sleep. But there remains
One danger to obstruct my path: if caught
Stealing into the palace, and intent
On such emprise, in death shall I afford
A subject of derision to my foes.
This obvious method were the best, in which
I am most skilled, to take their lives away
By sorceries. Be it so; suppose them dead.
What city will receive me for its guest,
What hospitable foreigner afford
A shelter in his land, or to his hearth
Admit, or snatch me from impending fate?
Alas! I have no friend. I will delay
A little longer therefore; if perchance,
To screen me from destruction, I can find
Some fortress, then I in this deed of blood
With artifice and silence will engage;
But, if by woes inextricable urged
Too closely, snatching up the dagger them
Am I resolved to slay, although myself

Must perish too; for courage unappalled
This bosom animates. By that dread queen,
By her whom first of all th' immortal powers
I worship, and to aid my bold emprise
Have chosen, the thrice awful Hecaté,
Who in my innermost apartment dwells,
Not one of them shall triumph in the pangs
With which they wound my heart; for I will render
This spousal rite to them a plenteous source
Of bitterness and mourning—they shall rue
Their union, rue my exile from this land.
But now come on, nor, O Medea, spare
Thy utmost science to devise and frame
Deep stratagems, with swift career advance
To deeds of horror. Such a strife demands
Thy utmost courage. Hast thou any sense
Of these indignities? Nor is it fit
That thou, who spring'st from an illustrious sire,
And from that great progenitor the sun,
Should'st be derided by the impious brood
Of Sisyphos, at Jason's nuptial feast
Exposed to scorn: for thou hast ample skill
To right thyself. Although by Nature formed
Without a genius apt for virtuous deeds,
We women are in mischiefs most expert.

CHORUS.—Now upward to their source the rivers flow,
And in a retrograde career
Justice and all the baffled virtues go.
The views of man are insincere,
Nor to the gods though he appeal,
And with an oath each promise seal,
Can he be trusted. Yet doth veering fame
Loudly assert the female claim,
Causing our sex to be renowned,
And our whole lives with glory crowned.
No longer shall we mourn the wrongs
Of slanderous and inhuman tongues.
Nor shall the Muses, as in ancient days,
Make the deceit of womankind
The constant theme of their malignant lays.

For ne'er on our uncultured mind
Hath Phœbos, god of verse, bestowed
Genius to frame the lofty ode;
Else had we waked the lyre, and in reply
With descants on man's infamy
Oft lengthened out th' opprobrious page.
Yet may we from each distant age
Collect such records as disgrace
Both us and man's imperious race.

By love distracted, from thy native strand,
Thou 'twixt the ocean's clashing rocks didst sail.
But now, loathed inmate of a foreign land,
Thy treacherous husband's loss art doomed to wail.
O hapless matron, overwhelmed with woe,
From this unpitying realm dishonored must thou go.

No longer sacred oaths their credit bear,
And virtuous shame hath left the Grecian plain,
She mounts to Heaven, and breathes a purer air.
For thee doth no paternal house remain
The sheltering haven from affliction's tides;
Over these hostile roofs a mightier queen presides.

Enter Jason.

JASON.—Not now for the first time, but oft, full oft
Have I observed that anger is a pest
The most unruly. For when in this land,
These mansions, you in peace might have abode,
By patiently submitting to the will
Of your superiors, you, for empty words,
Are doomed to exile. Not that I regard
Your calling Jason with incessant rage
The worst of men; but for those bitter taunts
With which you have reviled a mighty king,
Too mild a penalty may you esteem
Such banishment. I still have soothed the wrath
Of the offended monarch, still have wished
That you might here continue; but no bounds

Your folly knows, nor can that tongue e'er cease
To utter menaces against your lords;
Hence from these regions justly are you doomed
To be cast forth. But with unwearied love
Attentive to your interest am I come,
Lest with your children you by cruel want
Should be encompassed; exile with it brings
Full many evils. Me, though you abhor,
To you I harbor no unfriendly thought.

MEDEA.—Thou worst of villains (for this bitter charge
Against thy abject cowardice my tongue
May justly urge), com'st thou to me, O wretch,
Who to the gods art odious, and to me
And all the human race? It is no proof
Of courage, or of steadfastness, to face
Thy injured friends, but impudence, the worst
Of all diseases. Yet hast thou done well
In coming: I by uttering the reproaches
Which thou deservest shall ease my burdened soul,
And thou wilt grieve to hear them. With th' events
Which happened first will I begin my charge.
Each Grecian chief who in the Argo sailed
Knows how from death I saved thee, when to yoke
The raging bulls whose nostrils poured forth flames,
And sow the baleful harvest, thou wert sent:
Then having slain the dragon, who preserved
With many a scaly fold the golden fleece,
Nor ever closed in sleep his watchful eyes,
I caused the morn with its auspicious beams
To shine on thy deliverance; but, my sire
And native land betraying, came with thee
To Pelion, and Iolchos' gates: for love
Prevailed o'er reason. Pelias next I slew—
Most wretched death—by his own daughter's hands,
And thus delivered thee from all thy fears.
Yet though to me, O most ungrateful man,
Thus much indebted, hast thou proved a traitor,
And to the arms of this new consort fled,
Although a rising progeny is thine.
Hadst thou been childless, 'twere a venial fault

In thee to court another for thy bride.
But vanished is the faith which oaths erst bore,
Nor can I judge whether thou think'st the gods
Who ruled the world have lost their ancient power
Or that fresh laws at present are in force
Among mankind, because thou to thyself
Art conscious, thou thy plighted faith hast broken.
O my right hand, which thou didst oft embrace,
Oft to these knees a suppliant cling! How vainly
Did I my virgin purity yield up
To a perfidious husband, led astray
By flattering hopes! Yet I to thee will speak
As if thou wert a friend, and I expected
From thee some mighty favor to obtain:
Yet thou, if strictly questioned, must appear
More odious. Whither shall I turn me now?
To those deserted mansions of my father,
Which, with my country, I to thee betrayed,
And hither came; or to the wretched daughters
Of Pelias? They forsooth, whose sire I slew,
Beneath their roofs with kindness would receive me.
'Tis even thus: by those of my own house
Am I detested, and, to serve thy cause,
Those very friends, whom least of all I ought
To have unkindly treated, have I made
My enemies. But eager to reap
Such favors, 'mongst unnumbered Grecian dames,
On me superior bliss hast thou bestowed,
And I, unhappy woman, find in thee
A husband who deserves to be admired
For his fidelity. But from this realm
When I am exiled, and by every friend
Deserted, with my children left forlorn,
A glorious triumph, in thy bridal hour,
To thee will it afford, if those thy sons,
And I who saved thee, should like vagrants roam.
Wherefore, O Jove, didst thou instruct mankind
How to distinguish by undoubted marks
Counterfeit gold, yet in the front of vice
Impress no brand to show the tainted heart?

CHORUS.—How sharp their wrath, how hard to be appeased,
When friends with friends begin the cruel strife.
JASON.—I ought not to be rash, it seems, in speech,
But like the skilful pilot, who, with sails
Scarce half unfurled, his bark more surely guides,
Escape, O woman, your ungoverned tongue.
Since you the benefits on me conferred
Exaggerate in so proud a strain, I deem
That I to Venus only, and no god
Or man beside, my prosperous voyage owe.
Although a wondrous subtlety of soul
To you belong, 'twere an invidious speech
For me to make should I relate how Love
By his inevitable shafts constrained you
To save my life. I will not therefore state
This argument too nicely, but allow,
As you did aid me, it was kindly done.
But by preserving me have you gained more
Than you bestowed, as I shall prove: and first,
Transplanted from barbaric shores, you dwell
In Grecian regions, and have here been taught
To act as justice and the laws ordain,
Nor follow the caprice of brutal strength.
By all the Greeks your wisdom is perceived,
And you acquire renown; but had you still
Inhabited that distant spot of earth,
You never had been named. I would not wish
For mansions heaped with gold, or to exceed
The sweetest notes of Orpheus' magic lyre,
Were those unfading wreaths which fame bestows
From me withheld by fortune. I thus far
On my own labors only have discoursed.
For you this odious strife of words began.
But in espousing Creon's royal daughter,
With which you have reproached me, I will prove
That I in acting thus am wise and chaste,
That I to you have been the best of friends,
And to our children. But make no reply.
Since hither from Iolchos' land I came,
Accompanied by many woes, and such

As could not be avoided, what device
More advantageous could an exile frame
Than wedding the king's daughter? Not through hate
To you, which you reproach me with, not smitten
With love for a new consort, or a wish
The number of my children to augment:
For those we have already might suffice,
And I complain not. But to me it seemed
Of great importance that we both might live
As suits our rank, nor suffer abject need,
Well knowing that each friend avoids the poor.
I also wished to educate our sons
In such a manner as befits my race
And with their noble brothers yet unborn,
Make them one family, that thus, my house
Cementing, I might prosper. In some measure
Is it your interest too that by my bride
I should have sons, and me it much imports,
By future children, to provide for those
Who are in being. Have I judged amiss?
You would not censure me, unless your soul
Were by a rival stung. But your whole sex
Hath these ideas; if in marriage blest
Ye deem nought wanting, but if some reverse
Of fortune e'er betide the nuptial couch,
All that was good and lovely ye abhor.
Far better were it for the human race
Had children been produced by other means,
No females e'er existing: hence might man
Exempt from every evil have remained.

CHORUS.—Thy words hast thou with specious art adorned,
Yet thou to me (it is against my will
That I such language hold), O Jason, seem'st
Not to have acted justly in betraying
Thy consort.

MEDEA.— From the many I dissent
In many points: for, in my judgment, he
Who tramples on the laws, but can express
His thoughts with plausibility, deserves
Severest punishment: for that injustice

On which he glories, with his artful tongue,
That he a fair appearance can bestow,
He dares to practise, nor is truly wise.
No longer then this specious language hold
To me, who by one word can strike thee dumb.
Hadst thou not acted with a base design,
It was thy duty first to have prevailed
On me to give consent, ere these espousals
Thou hadst contracted, nor kept such design
A secret from thy friends.

JASON.— You would have served
My cause most gloriously, had I disclosed
To you my purposed nuptials, when the rage
Of that proud heart still unsubdued remains.

MEDEA.—Thy real motive was not what thou say'st,
But a Barbarian wife, in thy old age,
Might have appeared to tarnish thy renown.

JASON.—Be well assured, love urged me not to take
The daughter of the monarch to my bed.
But 'twas my wish to save you from distress,
As I already have declared, and raise
Some royal brothers to our former sons,
Strengthening with fresh supports our shattered house.

MEDEA.—May that prosperity which brings remorse
Be never mine, nor riches such as sting
The soul with anguish.

JASON.— Are you not aware
You soon will change your mind and grow more wise?
Forbear to spurn the blessings you possess,
Nor droop beneath imaginary woes,
When you are happy.

MEDEA.— Scoff at my distress,
For thou hast an asylum to receive thee:
But from this land am I constrained to roam
A lonely exile.

JASON.— This was your own choice:
Accuse none else.

MEDEA.— What have I done—betrayed
My plighted faith and sought a foreign bed?

JASON.—You uttered impious curses 'gainst the king.
MEDEA.—I also in thy mansions am accursed.
JASON.—With you I on these subjects will contend
No longer. But speak freely, what relief,
Or for the children or your exiled state,
You from my prosperous fortunes would receive:
For with a liberal hand am I inclined
My bounties to confer, and hence despatch
Such tokens, as to hospitable kindness
Will recommend you. Woman, to refuse
These offers were mere folly; from your soul
Banish resentment, and no trifling gain
Will hence ensue.
MEDEA.— No use I of thy friends
Will make, nor aught accept; thy presents spare,
For nothing which the wicked man can give
Proves beneficial.
JASON.— I invoke the gods
To witness that I gladly would supply
You and your children with whate'er ye need:
But you these favors loathe, and with disdain
Repel your friends: hence an increase of woe
Shall be your lot.
MEDEA.— Be gone; for thou, with love
For thy young bride inflamed, too long remain'st
Without the palace. Wed her; though perhaps
(Yet with submission to the righteous gods,
This I announce) such marriage thou may'st rue.
[*Exit Jason.*
CHORUS.—Th' immoderate loves in their career,
Nor glory nor esteem attends,
But when the Cyprian queen descends
Benignant from her starry sphere,
No goddess can more justly claim
From man the grateful prayer.
Thy wrath, O Venus, still forbear,
Nor at my tender bosom aim
That venomed arrow, ever wont t' inspire
Winged from thy golden bow the pangs of keen desire.

May I in modesty delight,
Best present which the gods can give,
Nor torn by jarring passions live
A prey to wrath and cankered spite,
Still envious of a rival's charms,
Nor rouse the endless strife
While on my soul another wife
Impresses vehement alarms:
On us, dread queen, thy mildest influence shed,
Thou who discern'st each crime that stains the nuptial bed.

My native land, and dearest home!
May I ne'er know an exiled state,
Nor be it ever my sad fate
While from thy well-known bourn I roam,
My hopeless anguish to bemoan.
Rather let death, let death
Take at that hour my forfeit breath,
For surely never was there known
On earth a curse so great as to exceed,
From his loved country torn, the wretched exile's need.

These eyes attest thy piteous tale,
Which not from fame alone we know;
But, O thou royal dame, thy woe
No generous city doth bewail,
Nor one among thy former friends.
Abhorred by Heaven and earth,
Perish the wretch devoid of worth,
Engrossed by mean and selfish ends,
Whose heart expands not those he loved to aid;
Never may I lament attachments thus repaid.

Enter Ægeus.

ÆGEUS.—Medea, hail! for no man can devise
Terms more auspicious to accost his friends.
MEDEA.—And you, O son of wise Pandion, hail
Illustrious Ægeus. But to these domains
Whence came you?

ÆGEUS.— From Apollo's ancient shrine.
MEDEA.—But to that centre of the world, whence sounds
Prophetic issue, why did you repair?
ÆGEUS.—To question by what means I may obtain
A race of children.
MEDEA.— By the gods, inform me,
Are you still doomed to drag a childless life?
ÆGEUS.—Such is the influence of some adverse demon.
MEDEA.—Have you a wife, or did you never try
The nuptial yoke?
ÆGEUS.— With wedlock's sacred bonds
I am not unacquainted.
MEDEA.— On the subject
Of children, what did Phœbos say?
ÆGEUS.— His words
Were such as mortals cannot comprehend.
MEDEA.—Am I allowed to know the god's reply?
ÆGEUS.—Thou surely art: such mystery to expound
There needs the help of thy sagacious soul.
MEDEA.—Inform me what the oracle pronounced,
If I may hear it.
ÆGEUS.— "The projecting foot,
Thou, of the vessel must not dare to loose"—
MEDEA.—Till you do what, or to what region come?
ÆGEUS.—"Till thou return to thy paternal lares."
MEDEA.—But what are you in need of, that you steer
Your bark to Corinth's shores?
ÆGEUS.— A king, whose name
Is Pittheus, o'er Trœzene's realm presides.
MEDEA.—That most religious man, they say, is son
Of Pelops.
ÆGEUS.— I with him would fain discuss
The god's prophetic voice.
MEDEA.— For he is wise,
And in this science long hath been expert.
ÆGEUS.—Dearest to me of those with whom I formed
A league of friendship in the embattled field.
MEDEA.—But, O may you be happy, and obtain
All that you wish for.
ÆGEUS.— Why those downcast eyes,
That wasted form?

MEDEA.— O Ægeus, he I wedded
To me hath proved of all mankind most base.
ÆGEUS.—What mean'st thou? In plain terms thy grief declare.
MEDEA.—Jason hath wronged me, though without a cause.
ÆGEUS.—Be more explicit, what injurious treatment
Complain'st thou of?
MEDEA.— To me hath he preferred
Another wife, the mistress of this house.
ÆGEUS.—Dared he to act so basely?
MEDEA.— Be assured
That I, whom erst he loved, am now forsaken.
ÆGEUS.—What amorous passion triumphs o'er his soul?
Or doth he loathe thy bed?
MEDEA.— 'Tis mighty love,
That to his first attachment makes him false.
ÆGEUS.—Let him depart then, if he be so void
Of honor as thou say'st.
MEDEA.— He sought to form
Alliance with a monarch.
ÆGEUS.— Who bestows
On him a royal bride? Conclude thy tale.
MEDEA.—Creon, the ruler of this land.
ÆGEUS.— Thy sorrows
Are then excusable.
MEDEA.— I am undone,
And banished hence.
ÆGEUS.— By whom? There is not a word
Thou utter'st but unfolds fresh scenes of woe.
MEDEA.—Me from this realm to exile Creon drives.
ÆGEUS.—Doth Jason suffer this? I cannot praise
Such conduct.
MEDEA.— Not in words: though he submits
Without reluctance. But I by that beard,
And by those knees, a wretched suppliant, crave
Your pity; see me not cast forth forlorn,
But to your realms and to your social hearth
Receive me as a guest; so may your desire
For children be accomplished by the gods,
And happiness your close of life attend.
But how important a discovery Fortune

To you here makes you are not yet apprised:
For destitute of heirs will I permit you
No longer to remain, but through my aid
Shall you have sons, such potent drugs I know.

ÆGEUS.—Various inducements urge me to comply
With this request, O woman; first an awe
For the immortal gods, and then the hope
That I the promised issue shall obtain.
On what my senses scarce can comprehend
I will rely. O that thy arts may prove
Effectual! Thee, if haply thou arriv'st
In my domain, with hospitable rites
Shall it be my endeavor to receive,
As justice dictates: but to thee, thus much
It previously behoves me to announce:
I will not take thee with me from this realm;
But to my house if of thyself thou come
Thou a secure asylum there shalt find,
Nor will I yield thee up to any foe.
But hence without my aid must thou depart,
For I, from those who in this neighboring land
Of Corinth entertain me as their guest,
Wish to incur no censure.

MEDEA.— Your commands
Shall be obeyed: but would you plight your faith
That you this promise will to me perform,
A noble friend in you shall I have found.

ÆGEUS.—Believ'st thou not? Whence rise these anxious doubts?

MEDEA.—In you I trust; though Pelias' hostile race
And Creon's hate pursue me: but, if bound
By the firm sanction of a solemn oath,
You will not suffer them with brutal force
To drag me from your realm, but having entered
Into such compact, and by every god
Sworn to protect me, still remain a friend,
Nor hearken to their embassies. My fortune
Is in its wane, but wealth to them belongs,
And an imperial mansion.

ÆGEUS.— In these words

Hast thou expressed great forethought: but if thus
Thou art disposed to act, I my consent
Will not refuse; for I shall be more safe
If to thy foes some plausible excuse
I can allege, and thee more firmly stablish.
But say thou first what gods I shall invoke.

MEDEA.—Swear by the earth on which we tread, the sun
My grandsire, and by all the race of gods.

ÆGEUS.—What action, or to do or to forbear?

MEDEA.—That from your land you never will expel,
Nor while you live consent that any foe
Shall tear me thence.

ÆGEUS.— By earth, the radiant sun,
And every god I swear, I to the terms
Thou hast proposed will steadfastly adhere.

MEDEA.—This may suffice. But what if you infringe
Your oath, what punishment will you endure?

ÆGEUS.—Each curse that can befall the impious man.

MEDEA.—Depart, and prosper: all things now advance
In their right track, and with the utmost speed
I to your city will direct my course,
When I have executed those designs
I meditate, and compassed what I wish.

[*Exit Ægeus.*

CHORUS.—But thee, O king, may Maia's wingèd son
Lead to thy Athens; there may'st thou attain
All that thy soul desires, for thou to me,
O Ægeus, seem'st most generous.

MEDEA.— Awful Jove,
Thou too, O Justice, who art ever joined
With thundering Jove, and bright Hyperion's beams,
You I invoke. Now, O my friends, o'er those
I hate shall we prevail: 'tis the career
Of victory that we tread, and I at length
Have hopes the strictest vengeance on my foes
To execute: for where we most in need
Of a protector stood, appeared this stranger,
The haven of my counsels: we shall fix
Our cables to this poop, soon as we reach
That hallowed city where Minerva reigns.

But now to you the whole of my designs
Will I relate; look not for such a tale
As yields delight: some servant will I send
An interview with Jason to request,
And on his coming, in the softest words
Address him; say these matters are well pleasing
To me, and in the strongest terms applaud
That marriage with the daughter of the king,
Which now the traitor celebrates; then add,
" 'Tis for our mutual good, 'tis rightly done."
But the request which I intend to make
Is that he here will let my children stay;
Not that I mean to leave them thus behind,
Exposed to insults in a hostile realm
From those I hate; but that my arts may slay
The royal maid: with presents in their hands,
A vesture finely wrought and golden crown,
Will I despatch them; these they to the bride
Shall bear, that she their exile may reverse:
If these destructive ornaments she take
And put them on, both she, and every one
Who touches her, shall miserably perish—
My presents with such drugs I will anoint.
Far as to this relates, here ends my speech.
But I with anguish think upon a deed
Of more than common horror, which remains
By me to be accomplished: for my sons
Am I resolved to slay, them from this arm
Shall no man rescue. When I thus have filled
With dire confusion Jason's wretched house,
I, from this land, yet reeking with the gore
Of my dear sons, will fly, and having dared
A deed most impious. For the scornful taunts
Of those we hate are not to be endured,
Happen what may. Can life be any gain
To me who have no country left, no home,
No place of refuge? Greatly did I err
When I forsook the mansions of my sire,
Persuaded by the flattery of that Greek
Whom I will punish, if just Heaven permit.

For he shall not again behold the children
I bore him while yet living. From his bride
Nor shall there issue any second race,
Since that vile woman by my baleful drugs
Vilely to perish have the Fates ordained.
None shall think lightly of me, as if weak,
Of courage void, or with a soul too tame,
But formed by Heaven in a far different mould,
The terror of my foes, and to my friends
Benignant: for most glorious are the lives
Of those who act with such determined zeal.

CHORUS.—Since thy design thus freely thou to us
Communicat'st, I, through a wish to serve
Thy interests, and a reverence for those laws
Which all mankind hold sacred, from thy purpose
Exhort thee to desist.

MEDEA.— This cannot be:
Yet I from you, because ye have not felt
Distress like mine, such language can excuse.

CHORUS.—Thy guiltless children wilt thou dare to slay?

MEDEA.—My husband hence more deeply shall I wound.

CHORUS.—But thou wilt of all women be most wretched.

MEDEA.—No matter: all the counsels ye can give
Are now superfluous. But this instant go
And Jason hither bring; for on your faith,
In all things I depend; nor these resolves
Will you divulge if you your mistress love,
And feel a woman's interest in my wrongs.

CHORUS.—Heroes of Erectheus' race,
To the gods who owe your birth,
And in a long succession trace
Your sacred origin from earth,
Who on wisdom's fruit regale,
Purest breezes still inhale,
And behold skies ever bright,
Wandering through those haunted glades
Where fame relates that the Pierian maids,
Soothing the soul of man with chaste delight,
Taught Harmony to breathe her first enchanting tale.

From Cephisos' amber tide,
At the Cyprian queen's command,
As sing the Muses, are supplied
To refresh the thirsty land,
Fragrant gales of temperate air;
While around her auburn hair,
In a vivid chaplet twined
Never-fading roses bloom
And scent the champaign with their rich perfume,
Love comes in unison with wisdom joined,
Each virtue thrives if Beauty lend her fostering care.

For its holy streams renowned
Can that city, can that state
Where friendship's generous train are found
Shelter thee from public hate,
When, defiled with horrid guilt,
Thou thy children's blood hast spilt?
Think on this atrocious deed
Ere thy dagger aim the blow:
Around thy knees our suppliant arms we throw;
O doom not, doom them not to bleed.

How can thy relentless heart
All humanity disclaim,
Thy lifted arm perform its part?
Lost to a sense of honest shame,
Canst thou take their lives away,
And these guiltless children slay?
Soon as thou thy sons shalt view,
How wilt thou the tear restrain,
Or with their blood thy ruthless hands distain,
When prostrate they for mercy sue?

Enter Jason.

JASON.—I at your call am come; for though such hate
To me you bear, you shall not be denied
In this request; but let me hear what else
You would solicit.

MEDEA.— Jason, I of thee
Crave pardon for the hasty words I spoke;
Since just it were that thou shouldst bear my wrath,
When by such mutual proofs of love our union
Hath been cemented. For I reasoned thus,
And in these terms reproached myself: "O wretch,
Wretch that I am, what madness fires my breast?
Or why 'gainst those who counsel me aright
Such fierce resentment harbor? What just cause
Have I to hate the rulers of this land,
My husband too, who acts but for my good
In his espousal with the royal maid,
That to my sons he hence may add a race
Of noble brothers? Shall not I appease
The tempest of my soul? Why, when the gods
Confer their choicest blessings, should I grieve?
Have not I helpless children? Well I know
That we are banished from Thessalia's realm
And left without a friend." When I these thoughts
Maturely had revolved, I saw how great
My folly and how groundless was my wrath.
Now therefore I commend, now deem thee wise
In forming this connection for my sake:
But I was void of wisdom, or had borne
A part in these designs, the genial bed
Obsequiously attended, and with joy
Performed each menial office for the bride.
I will not speak in too reproachful terms
Of my own sex; but we, weak women, are
What nature formed us; therefore our defects
Thou must not imitate, nor yet return
Folly for folly. I submit and own
My judgment was erroneous, but at length
Have I formed better counsels. O my sons,
Come hither, leave the palace, from those doors
Advance, and in a soft persuasive strain
With me unite your father to accost,
Forget past enmity, and to your friends
Be reconciled, for 'twixt us is a league
Of peace established, and my wrath subsides.

Enter the sons of Jason and Medea.

Take hold of his right hand. Ah me, how great
Are my afflictions oft as I revolve
A deed of darkness in my laboring soul!
How long, alas! my sons, are ye ordained
To live, how long to stretch forth those dear arms?
Wretch that I am! how much am I disposed
To weep! how subject to each fresh alarm!
For I at length desisting from that strife,
Which with your sire I rashly did maintain,
Feel gushing tears bedew my tender cheek.

CHORUS.—Fresh tears too from these eyes have forced their way;
And may no greater ill than that which now
We suffer, overtake us!

JASON.— I applaud
Your present conduct, and your former rage
Condemn not; for 'tis natural that the race
Of women should be angry when their lord
For a new consort trucks them. But your heart
Is for the better changed, and you, though late,
At length acknowledge the resistless power
Of reason; this is acting like a dame
Endued with prudence. But for you, my sons,
Abundant safety your considerate sire
Hath with the favor of the gods procured,
For ye, I trust, shall with my future race
Bear the first rank in this Corinthian realm,
Advance to full maturity; the rest,
Aided by each benignant god, your father
Shall soon accomplish. Virtuously trained up
May I behold you at a riper age
Obtain pre-eminence o'er those I hate.
But, ha! Why with fresh tears do you thus keep
Those eyelids moist? From your averted cheeks
Why is the color fled, or why these words
Receive you not with a complacent ear?

MEDEA.—Nothing: my thoughts were busied for these children.

JASON.—Be of good courage, and for them depend
On my protecting care.

MEDEA.— I will obey,
Nor disbelieve the promise thou hast made:
But woman, ever frail, is prone to shed
Involuntary tears.
JASON.— But why bewail
With such deep groans these children?
MEDEA.— Them I bore;
And that our sons might live, while to the gods
Thou didst address thy vows, a pitying thought
Entered my soul; 'twas whether this could be.
But of th' affairs on which thou com'st to hold
This conference with me, have I told a part
Already, and to thee will now disclose
The sequel: since the rulers of this land
Resolve to banish me, as well I know
That it were best for me to give no umbrage,
Or to the king of Corinth, or to thee,
By dwelling here: because I to this house
Seem to bear enmity, from these domains
Will I depart: but urge thy suit to Creon,
That under thy paternal care our sons
May be trained up, nor from this realm expelled.
JASON.—Though doubtful of success, I yet am bound
To make th' attempt.
MEDEA.— Thou rather shouldst enjoin
Thy bride her royal father to entreat,
That he these children's exile may reverse.
JASON.—With pleasure; and I doubt not but on her,
If like her sex humane, I shall prevail.
MEDEA.—To aid thee in this difficult emprise
Shall be my care, for I to her will send
Gifts that I know in beauty far exceed
The gorgeous works of man; a tissued vest
And golden crown the children shall present,
But with the utmost speed these ornaments
One of thy menial train must hither bring,
For not with one, but with ten thousand blessings
Shall she be gratified; thee, best of men,
Obtaining for the partner of her bed,
And in possession of those splendid robes

Which erst the sun my grandsire did bestow
On his descendants: take them in your hands,
My children, to the happy royal bride
Instantly bear them, and in dower bestow,
For such a gift as ought not to be scorned
Shall she receive.

JASON.— Why rashly part with these?
Of tissued robes or gold can you suppose
The palace destitute? These trappings keep,
Nor to another give: for if the dame
On me place real value, well I know
My love she to all treasures will prefer.

MEDEA.—Speak not so hastily: the gods themselves
By gifts are swayed, as fame relates; and gold
Hath a far greater influence o'er the souls
Of mortals than the most persuasive words:
With fortune, the propitious heavens conspire
To add fresh glories to thy youthful bride,
All here submits to her despotic sway.
But I my children's exile would redeem,
Though at the cost of life, not gold alone.
But these adjacent mansions of the king
Soon as ye enter, O ye little ones,
Your sire's new consort and my queen entreat
That ye may not be banished from this land:
At the same time these ornaments present,
For most important is it that these gifts
With her own hands the royal dame receive.
Go forth, delay not, and, if ye succeed,
Your mother with the welcome tidings greet.

[*Exeunt Jason and Sons.*

CHORUS.—Now from my soul each hope is fled,
I deem those hapless children dead,
They rush to meet the wound:
Mistrustful of no latent pest
Th' exulting bride will seize the gorgeous vest,
Her auburn tresses crowned
By baleful Pluto, shall she stand,
And take the presents with an eager hand.

The splendid robe of thousand dyes
Will fascinate her raptured eyes,
And tempt her till she wear
The golden diadem, arrayed
To meet her bridegroom in th' infernal shade
She thus into the snare
Of death shall be surprised by fate,
Nor 'scape remorseless Atè's direful hate.

But as for thee whose nuptials bring
The proud alliance of a king,
'Midst dangers unespied
Thou madly rushing, aid'st the blow
Ordained by Heaven to lay thy children low,
And thy lamented bride:
O man, how little dost thou know
That o'er thy head impends severest woe!

Thy anguish I no less bemoan,
No less for thee, O mother, groan,
Bent on a horrid deed,
Thy children who resolv'st to slay,
Nor fear'st to take their guiltless lives away.
Those innocents must bleed,
Because, disdainful of thy charms,
Thy husband flies to a new consort's arms.

Enter Attendant and the Sons of Jason and Medea.

ATTENDANT.—Your sons, my honored mistress, are set free
From banishment; in her own hands those gifts
With courtesy the royal bride received;
Hence have your sons obtained their peace.
MEDEA.— No matter.
ATTENDANT.—Why stand you in confusion, when befriended
By prosperous fortune?
MEDEA.— Ah!
ATTENDANT.— This harsh reception
Accords not with the tidings which I bring.
MEDEA.—Alas! and yet again I say, alas!
ATTENDANT.—Have I related with unconscious tongue

Some great calamity, by the fond hope
Of bearing glad intelligence misled?
MEDEA.—For having told what thou hast told, no blame
To thee do I impute.
ATTENDANT.— But on the ground
Why fix those eyes, and shed abundant tears?
MEDEA.—Necessity constrains me: for the gods
Of Erebus and I in evil hour
Our baleful machinations have devised.
ATTENDANT.—Be of good cheer; for in your children still
Are you successful.
MEDEA.— 'Midst the realms of night
Others I first will plunge. Ah, wretched me!
ATTENDANT.—Not you alone are from your children torn,
Mortal you are, and therefore must endure
Calamity with patience.
MEDEA.— I these counsels
Will practise: but go thou into the palace,
And for the children whatsoe'er to-day
Is requisite, make ready. [*Exit Attendant.*
O my sons!
My sons! ye have a city and a house
Where, leaving hapless me behind, without
A mother ye forever shall reside.
But I to other realms an exile go,
Ere any help from you I could derive,
Or see you blest; the hymeneal pomp,
The bride, the genial couch, for you adorn,
And in these hands the kindled torch sustain.
How wretched am I through my own perverseness!
You, O my sons, I then in vain have nurtured,
In vain have toiled, and, wasted with fatigue,
Suffered the pregnant matron's grievous throes.
On you, in my afflictions, many hopes
I founded erst: that ye with pious care
Would foster my old age, and on the bier
Extend me after death—much envied lot
Of mortals; but these pleasing anxious thoughts
Are vanished now; for, losing you, a life
Of bitterness and anguish shall I lead.

But as for you, my sons, with those dear eyes
Fated no more your mother to behold,
Hence are ye hastening to a world unknown.
Why do ye gaze on me with such a look
Of tenderness, or wherefore smile? for these
Are your last smiles. Ah wretched, wretched me!
What shall I do? My resolution fails.
Sparkling with joy now I their looks have seen,
My friends, I can no more. To those past schemes
I bid adieu, and with me from this land
My children will convey. Why should I cause
A twofold portion of distress to fall
On my own head, that I may grieve the sire
By punishing his sons? This shall not be:
Such counsels I dismiss. But in my purpose
What means this change? Can I prefer derision,
And with impunity permit the foe
To 'scape? My utmost courage I must rouse:
For the suggestion of these tender thoughts
Proceeds from an enervate heart. My sons,
Enter the regal mansion. [*Exeunt Sons.*
As for those
Who deem that to be present were unholy
While I the destined victims offer up,
Let them see to it. This uplifted arm
Shall never shrink. Alas! alas! my soul
Commit not such a deed. Unhappy woman,
Desist and spare thy children; we will live
Together, they in foreign realms shall cheer
Thy exile. No, by those avenging fiends
Who dwell with Pluto in the realms beneath,
This shall not be, nor will I ever leave
My sons to be insulted by their foes.
They certainly must die; since then they must,
I bore and I will slay them: 'tis a deed
Resolved on, nor my purpose will I change.
Full well I know that now the royal bride
Wears on her head the magic diadem,
And in the variegated robe expires:
But, hurried on by fate, I tread a path

Of utter wretchedness, and them will plunge
Into one yet more wretched. To my sons
Fain would I say: "O stretch forth your right hands,
Ye children, for your mother to embrace.
O dearest hands, ye lips to me most dear,
Engaging features and ingenuous looks,
May ye be blest, but in another world;
For by the treacherous conduct of your sire
Are ye bereft of all this earth bestowed.
Farewell, sweet kisses—tender limbs, farewell!
And fragrant breath! I never more can bear
To look on you, my children." My afflictions
Have conquered me; I now am well aware
What crimes I venture on: but rage, the cause
Of woes most grievous to the human race,
Over my better reason hath prevailed.

CHORUS.—In subtle questions I full many a time
Have heretofore engaged, and this great point
Debated, whether woman should extend
Her search into abstruse and hidden truths.
But we too have a Muse, who with our sex
Associates to expound the mystic lore
Of wisdom, though she dwell not with us all.
Yet haply a small number may be found,
Among the multitude of females, dear
To the celestial Muses. I maintain,
They who in total inexperience live,
Nor ever have been parents, are more happy
Than they to whom much progeny belongs.
Because the childless, having never tried
Whether more pain or pleasure from their offspring
To mortals rises, 'scape unnumbered toils.
But I observe that they, whose fruitful house
Is with a lovely race of infants filled,
Are harassed with perpetual cares; how first
To train them up in virtue, and whence leave
Fit portions for their sons; but on the good
Or worthless, whether they these toils bestow
Remains involved in doubt. I yet must name
One evil the most grievous, to which all

The human race is subject; some there are
Who for their sons have gained sufficient wealth,
Seen them to full maturity advance,
And decked with every virtue, when, by fate
If thus it be ordained, comes death unseen
And hurries them to Pluto's gloomy realm.
Can it be any profit to the gods
To heap the loss of children, that one ill
Than all the rest more bitter, on mankind?

MEDEA.—My friends, with anxious expectation long
Here have I waited, from within to learn
How fortune will dispose the dread event.
But one of Jason's servants I behold
With breathless speed advancing: his looks show
That he some recent mischief would relate.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.—O thou, who impiously hast wrought a deed
Of horror, fly, Medea, from this land,
Fly with such haste as not to leave the bark
Or from the car alight.

MEDEA.— What crime, to merit
A banishment like this, have I committed?

MESSENGER.—By thy enchantments is the royal maid
This instant dead, and Creon, too, her sire.

MEDEA.—Most glorious are the tidings you relate:
Henceforth shall you be numbered with my friends
And benefactors.

MESSENGER.— Ha! what words are these?
Dost thou preserve thy senses yet entire?
O woman, hath not madness fired thy brain?
The wrongs thou to the royal house hast done
Hear'st thou with joy, nor shudder'st at the tale?

MEDEA.—Somewhat I have in answer to your speech:
But be not too precipitate, my friend;
Inform me how they died, for twofold joy
Wilt thou afford, if wretchedly they perished.

MESSENGER.—When with their father thy two sons arrived
And went into the mansion of the bride,
We servants, who had shared thy griefs, rejoiced;

For a loud rumor instantly prevailed
That all past strife betwixt thy lord and thee
Was reconciled. Some kissed the children's hands,
And some their auburn tresses. I with joy
To those apartments where the women dwell
Attended them. Our mistress, the new object
Of homage such as erst to thee was paid,
Ere she beheld thy sons on Jason cast
A look of fond desire: but then she veiled
Her eyes, and turned her pallid cheeks away
Disgusted at their coming, till his voice
Appeased her anger with these gentle words:
" O be not thou inveterate 'gainst thy friends,
But lay aside disdain, thy beauteous face
Turn hither, and let amity for those
Thy husband loves still warm that generous breast.
Accept these gifts, and to thy father sue,
That, for my sake, the exile of my sons
He will remit." Soon as the princess saw
Thy glittering ornaments, she could resist
No longer, but to all her lord's requests
Assented, and before thy sons were gone
Far from the regal mansion with their sire,
The vest, resplendent with a thousand dyes,
Put on, and o'er her loosely floating hair
Placing the golden crown, before the mirror
Her tresses braided, and with smiles surveyed
Th' inanimated semblance of her charms:
Then rising from her seat across the palace
Walked with a delicate and graceful step,
In the rich gifts exulting, and oft turned
Enraptured eyes on her own stately neck,
Reflected to her view: but now a scene
Of horror followed; her complexion changed,
And she reeled backward, trembling every limb;
Scarce did her chair receive her as she sunk
In time to save her falling to the ground.
One of her menial train, an aged dame,
Possest with an idea that the wrath
Either of Pan or of some god unknown

Her mistress had invaded, in shrill tone
Poured forth a vow to Heaven, till from her mouth
She saw foam issue, in their sockets roll
Her wildly glaring eyeballs, and the blood
Leave her whole frame; a shriek, that differed far
From her first plaints, then gave she. In an instant
This to her father's house, and that to tell
The bridegroom the mischance which had befallen
His consort, rushed impetuous; through the dome
The frequent steps of those who to and fro
Ran in confusion did resound. But soon
As the fleet courser at the goal arrives,
She who was silent, and had closed her eyes,
Roused from her swoon, and burst forth into groans
Most dreadful, for 'gainst her two evils warred:
Placed on her head the golden crown poured forth
A wondrous torrent of devouring flames,
And the embroidered robes, thy children's gifts,
Preyed on the hapless virgin's tender flesh;
Covered with fire she started from her seat
Shaking her hair, and from her head the crown
With violence attempting to remove,
But still more firmly did the heated gold
Adhere, and the fanned blaze with double lustre
Burst forth as she her streaming tresses shook:
Subdued by fate, at length she to the ground
Fell prostrate: scarce could anyone have known her
Except her father; for those radiant eyes
Dropped from their sockets, that majestic face
Its wonted features lost, and blood with fire
Ran down her head in intermingled streams,
While from her bones the flesh, like weeping pitch,
Melted away, through the consuming power
Of those unseen enchantments; 'twas a sight
Most horrible: all feared to touch the corpse,
For her disastrous end had taught us caution.
Meanwhile her hapless sire, who knew not aught
Of this calamity, as he with haste
Entered the palace, stumbled o'er her body;
Instantly shrieking out, then with his arms

Infolded, kissed it oft, and, "O my child,
My wretched child," exclaimed; "what envious god,
Author of thy dishonorable fall,
Of thee bereaves an old decrepit man
Whom the grave claims? With thee I wish to die,
My daughter." Scarcely had the hoary father
These lamentations ended; to uplift
His feeble body striving, he adhered
(As ivy with its pliant tendrils clings
Around the laurel) to the tissued vest.
Dire was the conflict; he to raise his knee
From earth attempted, but his daughter's corse
Still held him down, or if with greater force
He dragged it onward, from his bones he tore
The aged flesh: at length he sunk, and breathed
In agonizing pangs his soul away;
For he against such evil could bear up
No longer. To each other close in death
The daughter and her father lie: their fate
Demands our tears. Warned by my words, with haste
From this domain convey thyself, or vengeance
Will overtake thee for this impious deed.
Not now for the first time do I esteem
Human affairs a shadow. Without fear
Can I pronounce, they who appear endued
With wisdom, and most plausibly trick out
Specious harangues, deserve to be accounted
The worst of fools. The man completely blest
Exists not. Some in overflowing wealth
May be more fortunate, but none are happy.

CHORUS.—Heaven its collected store of evil seems
This day resolved with justice to pour down
On perjured Jason. Thy untimely fate
How do we pity, O thou wretched daughter
Of Creon, who in Pluto's mansions go'st
To celebrate thy nuptial feast.

MEDEA.— My friends,
I am resolved, as soon as I have slain
My children, from these regions to depart,
Nor through inglorious sloth will I abandon

My sons to perish by detested hands;
They certainly must die; since then they must,
I bore and I will slay them. O my heart!
Be armed with tenfold firmness. What avails it
To loiter, when inevitable ills
Remain to be accomplished? Take the sword,
And, O my hand, on to the goal that ends
Their life, nor let one intervening thought
Of pity or maternal tenderness
Suspend thy purpose: for this one short day
Forget how fondly thou didst love thy sons,
How bring them forth, and after that lament
Their cruel fate: although thou art resolved
To slay, yet hast thou ever held them dear.
But I am of all women the most wretched.

[*Exit Medea.*

CHORUS.— Earth, and thou sun, whose fervid blaze
From pole to pole illumes each distant land,
View this abandoned woman, ere she raise
Against her children's lives a ruthless hand;
For from thy race, divinely bright,
They spring, and should the sons of gods be slain
By man, 'twere dreadful. O restrain
Her fury, thou celestial source of light,
Ere she with blood pollute your regal dome,
Chased by the demons hence let this Erinyes roam.

The pregnant matron's throes in vain
Hast thou endured, and borne a lovely race,
O thou, who o'er th' inhospitable main,
Where the Cyanean rocks scarce leave a space,
Thy daring voyage didst pursue.
Why, O thou wretch, thy soul doth anger rend,
Such as in murder soon must end?
They who with kindred gore are stained shall rue
Their guilt inexpiable: full well I know
The gods will on this house inflict severest woe.

1ST SON [*within*].—Ah me! what can I do, or whither fly
To 'scape a mother's arm?

2nd Son [*within*].— I cannot tell:
For, O my dearest brother, we are lost.
Chorus.—Heard you the children's shrieks? I (O thou dame,
Whom woes and evil fortune still attend)
Will rush into the regal dome, from death
Resolved to snatch thy sons.
1st Son [*within*].— We by the gods
Conjure you to protect us in this hour
Of utmost peril, for the treacherous snare
Hath caught us, and we perish by the sword.
Chorus.—Art thou a rock, O wretch, or steel, to slay
With thine own hand that generous race of sons
Whom thou didst bear? I hitherto have heard
But of one woman, who in ancient days
Smote her dear children, Ino, by the gods
With frenzy stung, when Jove's malignant queen
Distracted from her mansion drove her forth.
But she, yet reeking with the impious gore
Of her own progeny, into the waves
Plunged headlong from the ocean's craggy beach,
And shared with her two sons one common fate.
Can there be deeds more horrible than these
Left for succeeding ages to produce?
Disastrous union with the female sex,
How great a source of woes art thou to man!

Enter Jason.

Jason.—Ye dames who near the portals stand, is she
Who hath committed these atrocious crimes,
Medea, in the palace, or by flight
Hath she retreated? For beneath the ground
Must she conceal herself, or, borne on wings,
Ascend the heights of Æther, to avoid
The vengeance due for Corinth's royal house.
Having destroyed the rulers of the land,
Can she presume she shall escape unhurt
From these abodes? But less am I concerned
On her account, than for my sons; since they
Whom she hath injured will on her inflict
Due punishment: but hither am I come

To save my children's lives, lest on their heads
The noble Creon's kindred should retaliate
That impious murder by their mother wrought.

CHORUS.—Thou know'st not yet, O thou unhappy man,
What ills thou art involved in, or these words
Had not escaped thee.

JASON.— Ha, what ills are these
Thou speak'st of? Would she also murder me?

CHORUS.—By their own mother's hand thy sons are slain.

JASON.—What can you mean? How utterly, O woman,
Have you undone me!

CHORUS.— Be assured thy children
Are now no more.

JASON.— Where was it, or within
Those mansions or without, that she destroyed
Our progeny?

CHORUS.— As soon as thou these doors
Hast oped, their weltering corses wilt thou view.

JASON.—Loose the firm bars and bolts of yonder gates
With speed, ye servants, that I may behold
This scene of twofold misery, the remains
Of the deceased, and punish her who slew them.

Enter Medea, in a chariot drawn by dragons.

MEDEA.—With levers wherefore dost thou shake those doors
In quest of them who are no more, and me
Who dared to perpetrate the bloody deed?
Desist from such unprofitable toil:
But if there yet be aught that thou with me
Canst want, speak freely whatsoe'er thou wilt:
For with that hand me never shalt thou reach,
Such steeds the sun my grandsire gives to whirl
This chariot and protect me from my foes.

JASON.—O most abandoned woman, by the gods,
By me and all the human race abhorred,
Who with the sword could pierce the sons you bore,
And ruin me, a childless wretched man,
Yet after you this impious deed have dared
To perpetrate, still view the radiant sun
And fostering earth; may vengeance overtake you!

For I that reason have regained which erst
Forsook me, when to the abodes of Greece
I from your home, from a barbarian realm,
Conveyed you, to your sire a grievous bane,
And the corrupt betrayer of that land
Which nurtured you. Some envious god first roused
Your evil genius from the shades of hell
For my undoing: after you had slain
Your brother at the altar, you embarked
In the famed Argo. Deeds like these a life
Of guilt commenced; with me in wedlock joined,
You bore those sons, whom you have now destroyed
Because I left your bed. No Grecian dame
Would e'er have ventured on a deed so impious;
Yet I to them preferred you for my bride:
This was a hostile union, and to me
The most destructive; for my arms received
No woman, but a lioness more fell
Than Tuscan Scylla. Vainly should I strive
To wound you with reproaches numberless,
For you are grown insensible of shame!
Vile sorceress, and polluted with the blood
Of your own children, perish—my hard fate
While I lament, for I shall ne'er enjoy
My lovely bride, nor with those sons, who owe
To me their birth and nurture, ever hold
Sweet converse. They, alas! can live no more,
Utterly lost to their desponding sire.

MEDEA.—Much could I say in answer to this charge,
Were not the benefits from me received,
And thy abhorred ingratitude, well-known
To Jove, dread sire. Yet was it not ordained,
Scorning my bed, that thou shouldst lead a life
Of fond delight, and ridicule my griefs;
Nor that the royal virgin thou didst wed,
Or Creon, who to thee his daughter gave,
Should drive me from these regions unavenged.
A lioness then call me if thou wilt,
Or by the name of Scylla, whose abode
Was in Etrurian caverns. For thy heart,
As justice prompted, in my turn I wounded.

JASON.—You grieve, and are the partner of my woes.
MEDEA.—Be well assured I am: but what assuages
My grief is this, that thou no more canst scoff.
JASON.—How vile a mother, O my sons, was yours!
MEDEA.—How did ye perish through your father's lust!
JASON.—But my right hand was guiltless of their death.
MEDEA.—Not so thy cruel taunts, and that new marriage.
JASON.—Was my new marriage a sufficient cause
For thee to murder them?
MEDEA.— Canst thou suppose
Such wrongs sit light upon the female breast?
JASON.—On a chaste woman's; but your soul abounds
With wickedness.
MEDEA.— Thy sons are now no more,
This will afflict thee.
JASON.— O'er your head, alas!
They now two evil geniuses impend.
MEDEA.—The gods know who these ruthless deeds began.
JASON.—They know the hateful temper of your soul.
MEDEA.—In detestation thee I hold, and loathe
Thy conversation.
JASON.— Yours too I abhor;
But we with ease may settle on what terms
To part forever.
MEDEA.— Name those terms. Say how
Shall I proceed? For such my ardent wish.
JASON.—Let me inter the dead, and o'er them weep.
MEDEA.—Thou shalt not. For their corses with this hand
Am I resolved to bury in the grove
Sacred to awful Juno, who protects
The citadel of Corinth, lest their foes
Insult them, and with impious rage pluck up
The monumental stone. I in this realm
Of Sisyphos moreover will ordain
A solemn festival and mystic rites,
To make a due atonement for my guilt
In having slain them. To Erectheus' land
I now am on my road, where I shall dwell
With Ægeus, great Pandion's son; but thou
Shalt vilely perish as thy crimes deserve,

Beneath the shattered relics of thy bark,
The Argo, crushed; such is the bitter end
Of our espousals and thy faith betrayed.
JASON.—May the Erinyes of our slaughtered sons,
And justice, who requites each murderous deed,
Destroy you utterly!
MEDEA.— Will any god
Or demon hear thy curses, O thou wretch,
False to thy oath, and to the sacred laws
Of hospitality?
JASON.— Most impious woman,
Those hands yet reeking with your children's gore—
MEDEA.—Go to the palace, and inter thy bride.
JASON.—Bereft of both my sons, I thither go.
MEDEA.—Not yet enough lament'st thou: to increase
Thy sorrows, may'st thou live till thou art old!
JASON.—Ye dearest children.
MEDEA.— To their mother dear,
But not to thee.
JASON.— Yet them have you destroyed.
MEDEA.—That I might punish thee.
JASON.— One more fond kiss
On their loved lips, ah me! would I imprint.
MEDEA.—Now wouldst thou speak to them, and in thine arms
Clasp those whom living thou didst banish hence.
JASON.—Allow me, I conjure you by the gods,
My children's tender bodies to embrace.
MEDEA.—Thou shalt not: these presumptuous words in vain
By thee were hazarded.
JASON.— Jove, hear'st thou this,
How I with scorn am driven away, how wronged
By that detested lioness, whose fangs
Have slain her children? Yet shall my loud plaints,
While here I fix my seat, if 'tis allowed,
And this be possible, call down the gods
To witness that you hinder me from touching
My murdered sons, and paying the deceased
Funereal honors. Would to Heaven I ne'er
Had seen them born to perish by your hand!
CHORUS.—Throned on Olympos, with his sovereign nod,

Jove unexpectedly performs the schemes
Divine foreknowledge planned; our firmest hopes
Oft fail us: but the god still finds the means
Of compassing what man could ne'er have looked for;
And thus doth this important business end.

THE KNIGHTS

—

BY

ARISTOPHANES

[*Metrical Translation by John Hookham Frere*]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

DEMUS.—A personification of the Athenian people, a quarrelsome, selfish, suspicious old man, a tyrant to his slaves, with the exception of one, the Paphlagonian, Cleon, by whom he is cajoled and deceived.

NICIAS and DEMOSTHENES.—Two most able generals of Athens, of very opposite characters; the one cautious and superstitious; the other a hearty, resolute, jolly fellow, who loves good wine. These two, *the servants of the public,* are naturally introduced as *the slaves of Demus.*

CLEON.—The Tanner (as he is called from his property consisting in a leather manufactory), or the Paphlagonian. He is represented as a fawning, obsequious slave, insolent and haughty to all except his master.

A SAUSAGE-SELLER, whose name, Agoracritus, is not declared till towards the conclusion of the play, is the person announced by the Oracle as ordained by fate to baffle Cleon, and to supersede him in the favor of his master.

CHORUS.

THE KNIGHTS

After a noise of lashes and screams from behind the scenes, Demosthenes comes out, and is followed by Nicias, the supposed victim of flagellation (both in the dress of slaves). Demosthenes breaks out in great wrath; while Nicias remains exhibiting various contortions of pain for the amusement of the audience.

DEMOSTHENES.—Out! out alas! what a scandal! what a shame!
May Jove in his utter wrath crush and confound
That rascally new-bought Paphlagonian slave!
For from the very first day that he came—
Brought here for a plague and a mischief amongst us all,
We're beaten and abused continually.

NICIAS [*whimpering in a broken voice*].—I say so too, with all my heart I do,
A rascal, with his slanders and lies!
A rascally Paphlagonian! so he is!

DEMOSTHENES [*roughly and good-humoredly*].—How are you, my poor soul?

NICIAS [*pettishly and whining*].—Why poorly enough;
And so are you for that matter.
[*Nicias continues writhing and moaning.*

DEMOSTHENES [*as if speaking to a child that had hurt himself*].
Well, come here then!
Come, and we'll cry together, both of us,
We'll sing it to Olympos's old tune.

BOTH [*Demosthenes accompanies Nicias's involuntary sobs, so as to make a tune of them*].
Mo moo momoo—momoo momoo—Momoo momoo.

DEMOSTHENES [*suddenly and heartily*].—Come, grief's no use —It's folly to keep crying.
Let's look about us a bit, what's best to be done.

NICIAS [*recovering himself*].—Aye, tell me; what do you think?

DEMOSTHENES.— No, you tell me—
Lest we should disagree.

NICIAS.— That's what I won't!
Do you speak boldly first, and I'll speak next.

DEMOSTHENES [*significantly, as quoting a well-known verse*].
"You first might utter, what I wish to tell." [1]

NICIAS.—Aye, but I'm so down-hearted, I've not spirit
To bring about the avowal cleverly,
In Euripides's style, by question and answer.

DEMOSTHENES.—Well, then, don't talk of Euripides any more,
Or his mother either; don't stand picking endive: [2]
But think of something in another style,
To the tune of "Trip and away."

NICIAS.— Yes, I'll contrive it:
Say "Let us" first; put the first letter to it,
And then the last, and then put E, R, T.
"Let us A zert." I say, "Let us Azert."
'Tis now your turn—take the next letter to it.
Put B for A.

DEMOSTHENES.— "Let us Bezert," I say—

NICIAS.—'Tis now my turn—"Let us Cezert," I say.
'Tis now your turn.

DEMOSTHENES.— "Let us Dezert," I say.

NICIAS.—You've said it!—and I agree to it—now repeat it
Once more!

DEMOSTHENES.— Let us Dezert! Let us Dezert!

NICIAS.—That's well.

DEMOSTHENES.— But somehow it seems unlucky, rather
An awkward omen to meet with in a morning!
"To meet with our deserts!"

NICIAS.— That's very true;
Therefore, I think, in the present state of things,
The best thing for us both, would be, to go
Directly to the shrine of one of the gods;
And pray for mercy, both of us together.

[1] From the tragedy of "Phædra:" she is trying to lead her nurse to mention the name of Hippolytus, while she avoids it herself.

[2] His mother was said to have been a herb woman.

DEMOSTHENES.—Shrines! shrines! Why sure, you don't believe in the gods.

NICIAS.—I do.

DEMOSTHENES.—But what's your argument? Where's your proof?

NICIAS.—Because I feel they persecute me and hate me,
In spite of everything I try to please 'em.

DEMOSTHENES.—Well, well. That's true; you're right enough in that.

NICIAS.—Let's settle something.

DEMOSTHENES.— Come, then—if you like
I'll state our case at once, to the audience here.

NICIAS.—It would not be much amiss; but first of all,
We must entreat of them; if the scene and action
Have entertained them hitherto, to declare it,
And encourage us with a little applause beforehand.

DEMOSTHENES [*to the audience*].—Well, come now! I'll tell ye about it. Here are we
A couple of servants, with a master at home
Next door to the hustings. He's a man in years,
A kind of a bean-fed [3] husky testy character,
Choleric and brutal at times, and partly deaf.
It's near about a month now, that he went
And bought a slave out of a tanner's yard,
A Paphlagonian born, and brought him home,
As wicked a slanderous wretch as ever lived.
This fellow, the Paphlagonian, has found out
The blind side of our master's understanding,
With fawning and wheedling in this kind of way:
"Would not you please to go to the bath, Sir? surely
It's not worth while to attend the courts to-day." [4]
And, "Would not you please to take a little refreshment?
And there's that nice hot broth—And here's the threepence
You left behind you—And would not you order supper?"
Moreover, when we get things out of compliment
As a present for our master, he contrives
To snatch 'em and serve 'em up before our faces.
I'd made a Spartan cake at Pylos lately,

[3] In allusion to the beans used in balloting.

[4] Sacrifices, with distribution of meat, and largesses to the people on holidays.

And mixed and kneaded it well, and watched the baking;
But he stole round before me and served it up:
And he never allows us to come near our master
To speak a word; but stands behind his back
At meal times, with a monstrous leathern fly-flap,
Slapping and whisking it round and rapping us off.
Sometimes the old man falls into moods and fancies,
Searching the prophecies till he gets bewildered;
And then the Paphlagonian plies him up,
Driving him mad with oracles and predictions.
And that's his harvest. Then he slanders us,
And gets us beaten and lashed, and goes his rounds
Bullying in this way, to squeeze presents from us:
"You saw what a lashing Hylas got just now;
You'd best make friends with me, if you love your lives.
Why then, we give him a trifle, or if we don't,
We pay for it; for the old fellow knocks us down,
And kicks us on the ground, and stamps and rages,
And tramples out the very entrails of us—
[*Turning to Nicias.*
So now, my worthy fellow; we must take
A fixed determination; now's the time,
Which way to turn ourselves and what to do.

NICIAS.—Our last determination was the best:
That which we settled to A' Be Cè *De-zert.*

DEMOSTHENES.—Aye, but we could not escape the Paphlagonian,
He overlooks us all; he keeps one foot
In Pylos, and another in the Assembly;
And stands with such a stature, stride and grasp;
That while his mouth is open in Eatolia,
One hand is firmly clenched upon the Lucrians,
And the other stretching forth to the Peribribèans.

NICIAS.—Let's die then, once for all; that's the best way,
Only we must contrive to manage it,
Nobly and manfully in a proper manner.

DEMOSTHENES.—Aye, aye. Let's do things manfully! that's my maxim!

NICIAS.—Well, there's the example of Themistocles—
To drink bull's blood: that seems a manly death.

DEMOSTHENES.—Bull's blood! The blood of the grape, I say! good wine!
Who knows? it might inspire some plan, some project,
Some notion or other, a good draught of it!
NICIAS.—Wine truly! wine!—still hankering after liquor!
Can wine do anything for us? Will your drink
Enable you to arrange a plan to save us?
Can wisdom ever arise from wine, do ye think?
DEMOSTHENES.—Do ye say so? You're a poor spring-water pitcher!
A silly chilly soul. I'll tell ye what:
It's a very presumptuous thing to speak of liquor,[5]
As an obstacle to people's understanding;
It's the only thing for business and despatch.
D'ye observe how individuals thrive and flourish
By dint of drink: they prosper in proportion;
They improve their properties; they get promotion;
Make speeches, and make interest, and make friends.
Come, quick now—bring me a lusty stoup of wine,
To moisten my understanding and inspire me.
NICIAS.—Oh dear! your drink will be the ruin of us!
DEMOSTHENES.—It will be the making of ye! Bring it here.
[*Exit Nicias.*
I'll rest me a bit; but when I've got my fill,
I'll overflow them all, with a flood of rhetoric,
With metaphors and phrases and what not.
[*Nicias returns in a sneaking way with a pot of wine.*
NICIAS [*in a sheepish silly tone of triumph*].—How lucky for me it was, that I escaped
With the wine that I took!
DEMOSTHENES [*carelessly and bluntly*].—Well where's the Paphlagonian?
NICIAS [*as before*].—He's fast asleep—within there, on his back,
On a heap of hides—the rascal! with his belly full,
With a hash of confiscations half-digested.
DEMOSTHENES.—That's well! Now fill me a hearty lusty draught.

[5] Though Demosthenes has not been drinking, his speech has the tone of a drunken man.

NICIAS [*formally and precisely*].—Make the libation first, and drink this cup
To the good Genius.

DEMOSTHENES [*respiring after a long draught*].—O most worthy Genius!
Good Genius! 'tis your genius that inspires me!
[*Demosthenes remains in a sort of drunken burlesque ecstasy.*

NICIAS.—Why, what's the matter?

DEMOSTHENES.— I'm inspired to tell you,
That you must steal the Paphlagonian's oracles
Whilst he's asleep.

NICIAS.— Oh dear then, I'm afraid,
This Genius will turn out my evil Genius.
[*Exit Nicias.*

DEMOSTHENES.—Come, I must meditate, and consult my pitcher;
And moisten my understanding a little more.

[*The interval of Nicias's absence is occupied by action in dumb show: Demosthenes is enjoying himself and getting drunk in private.*

NICIAS [*re-entering with a packet*].—How fast asleep the Paphlagonian was!
Lord bless me, how mortally he snored and stank.
However, I've contrived to carry it off,
The sacred oracle that he kept so secret—
I've stolen it from him.

DEMOSTHENES [*very drunk*].—That's my clever fellow!
Here give us hold; I must read 'em. Fill me a bumper.
In the meanwhile—make haste now. Let me see now—
What have we got?—What are they—these same papers?
Oh! oracles! . . . o—ra—cles!—Fill me a stoup of wine.

NICIAS [*fidgeting and impatient after giving him the wine*].—Come! come! what says the Oracle?

DEMOSTHENES.— Fill it again!

NICIAS.—Does the Oracle say, that I must fill it again?

DEMOSTHENES [*after tumbling over the papers with a hiccup*].
O Bakis![6]

NICIAS.— What?

[6] Demosthenes's articulation of this word is assisted by a hiccup.

DEMOSTHENES.— Fill me the stoup this instant.
NICIAS [*with a sort of puzzled acquiescence*].—Well, Bakis,
I've been told, was given to drink;
He prophesied in his liquor people say.
DEMOSTHENES [*with the papers in his hand*].—Aye, there it is—you rascally Paphlagonian!
This was the prophecy that you kept so secret.
NICIAS.—What's there?
DEMOSTHENES.— Why there's a thing to ruin him,
With the manner of his destruction, all foretold.
NICIAS.—As how?
DEMOSTHENES [*very drunk*].—Why the Oracle tells you how —distinctly—
And all about it—in a perspicuous manner—
That a jobber in hemp and flax [7] is first ordained
To hold the administration of affairs.
NICIAS.—Well, there's one jobber. Who's the next? Read on!
DEMOSTHENES.—A cattle jobber [8] must succeed to him.
NICIAS.—More jobbers! well—then what becomes of him?
DEMOSTHENES.—He too shall prosper, till a viler rascal
Shall be raised up, and shall prevail against him,
In the person of a Paphlagonian tanner,
A loud rapacious leather-selling ruffian.
NICIAS.—Is it foretold then, that the cattle jobber
Must be destroyed by the seller of leather?
DEMOSTHENES.— Yes.
NICIAS.—Oh dear, our sellers and jobbers are at an end.
DEMOSTHENES.—Not yet; there's still another to succeed him,
Of a most uncommon notable occupation.
NICIAS.—Who's that? Do tell me!
DEMOSTHENES.— Must I?
NICIAS.— To be sure.
DEMOSTHENES.—A sausage-seller it is, that supersedes him.
NICIAS.[9]—A sausage-seller! marvellous indeed,
Most wonderful! But where can he be found?
DEMOSTHENES.—We must seek him out.
[*Demosthenes rises and bustles up, with the action of a person who, having been drunk, is rousing and recollecting*

[7] After the death of Pericles, Eucrates and Lysicles had each taken the lead for a short time.
[8] See Note 7.
[9] In the tone of Dominie Sampson.

himself for a sudden important occasion. His following speeches are all perfectly sober.

NICIAS.— But see there, where he comes!
Sent hither providentially as it were!

DEMOSTHENES.—O happy man! celestial sausage-seller!
Friend, guardian and protector of us all!
Come forward; save your friends, and save the country.

Enter Sausage-Seller.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Do you call me?

DEMOSTHENES.— Yes, we called to you, to announce
The high and happy destiny that awaits you.

NICIAS.—Come, now you should set him free from the encumbrance [10]
Of his table and basket; and explain to him
The tenor and the purport of the Oracle,
While I go back to watch the Paphlagonian.
[*Exit Nicias.*

DEMOSTHENES [*to the Sausage-Seller gravely*].—Set these poor wares aside; and now—bow down
To the ground; and adore the powers of earth and heaven.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Heigh-day! Why, what do you mean?

DEMOSTHENES.— O happy man!
Unconscious of your glorious destiny,
Now mean and unregarded; but to-morrow,
The mightiest of the mighty, Lord of Athens.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Come, master, what's the use of making game?
Why can't ye let me wash the guts and tripe,
And sell my sausages in peace and quiet?

DEMOSTHENES.—O simple mortal, cast those thoughts aside!
Bid guts and tripe farewell! Look there! Behold
[*pointing to the audience*
The mighty assembled multitude before ye!

[10] This speech is intended to express the sudden impression of reverence with which Nicias is affected in the presence of the predestined supreme Sausage-seller. He does not presume to address him; but obliquely manifests his respect, by pointing out to Demosthenes (in his hearing) the marks of attention to which he is entitled.

SAUSAGE-SELLER [*with a grumble of indifference*].—I see 'em.
DEMOSTHENES.— You shall be their lord and master,
The sovereign and the ruler of them all,
Of the assemblies and tribunals, fleets and armies;
You shall trample down the Senate under foot,
Confound and crush the generals and commanders,
Arrest, imprison, and confine in irons,
And feast and fornicate in the Council House.[11]
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—What, I?
DEMOSTHENES.— Yes, you yourself: there's more to come.
Mount here; and from the trestles of your stall
Survey the subject islands circling round.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I see 'em.
DEMOSTHENES.— And all their ports and merchant vessels?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Yes, all.
DEMOSTHENES.— Then an't you a fortunate happy man?
An't you content? Come then for a further prospect—
Turn your right eye to Caria, and your left
To Carthage![12]—and contemplate both together.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Will it do me good, d'ye think, to learn to squint?
DEMOSTHENES.—Not so; but everything you see before you
Must be disposed of at your high discretion,
By sale or otherwise; for the Oracle
Predestines you to sovereign power and greatness.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Are there any means of making a great man
Of a sausage-selling fellow such as I?
DEMOSTHENES.—The very means you have, must make ye so,
Low breeding, vulgar birth, and impudence,
These, these must make ye, what you're meant to be.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I can't imagine that I'm good for much.
DEMOSTHENES.—Alas! But why do ye say so? What's the meaning
Of these misgivings? I discern within ye
A promise and an inward consciousness

[11] The Prytaneum, the honor of a seat at the public table, was sometimes conferred on persons of extraordinary merit in advanced years. Cleon had obtained this privilege for himself, and abused it insolently, as appears elsewhere.

[12] "Carthage" must be the true reading, the right eye to Caria and the left to "Chalcedon" would not constitute a squint.

Of greatness. Tell me truly: are ye allied
To the families of gentry?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— Naugh, not I;
I'm come from a common ordinary kindred,
Of the lower order.

DEMOSTHENES.— What a happiness!
What a footing will it give ye! What a groundwork
For confidence and favor at your outset!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But bless ye! only consider my education!
I can but barely read . . . in a kind of a way.

DEMOSTHENES.—That makes against ye!—the only thing against ye—
The being able to read, in any way:
For now no lead nor influence is allowed
To liberal arts or learned education,
But to the brutal, base, and under-bred.
Embrace then and hold fast the promises
Which the oracles of the gods announce to you.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But what does the Oracle say?

DEMOSTHENES.— Why thus it says,
In a figurative language, but withal
Most singularly intelligible and distinct,
Neatly expressed i'faith, concisely and tersely.[18]
"Moreover, when the eagle in his pride,
With crooked talons and a leathern hide,
Shall seize the black and blood-devouring snake;
Then shall the woful tanpits quail and quake;
And mighty Jove shall give command and place,
To mortals of the sausage-selling race;
Unless they choose, continuing as before,
To sell their sausages for evermore."

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But how does this concern me? Explain it, will ye?

DEMOSTHENES.—The leathern eagle is the Paphlagonian.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—What are his talons?

DEMOSTHENES.— That explains itself—
Talons for peculation and rapacity.

[18] This is perfectly in character. Demosthenes (as we have seen) does not profess to believe in the gods; yet we see that upon occasion he can discuss the merit of the "sacred classics;" like other critics, therefore, of the same description, he does it with a sort of patronizing tone.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But what's the snake?
DEMOSTHENES.— The snake is clear and obvious:
The snake is long and black, like a black-pudding;
The snake is filled with blood, like a black-pudding.
Our Oracle foretells then, that the snake
Shall baffle and overpower the leathern eagle.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—These oracles hit my fancy! Notwithstanding . . .
I'm partly doubtful, how I could contrive . . .
To manage an administration altogether . . .
DEMOSTHENES.—The easiest thing in nature!—nothing easier!
Stick to your present practice: follow it up
In your new calling. Mangle, mince and mash,
Confound and hack, and jumble things together!
And interlard your rhetoric with lumps
Of mawkish sweet, and greasy flattery.
Be fulsome, coarse, and bloody! For the rest,
All qualities combine, all circumstances,
To entitle and equip you for command;
A filthy voice, a villainous countenance,
A vulgar birth, and parentage, and breeding.
Nothing is wanting, absolutely nothing.
And the oracles and responses of the gods,
And prophecies, all conspire in your behalf.
Place then this chaplet on your brows!—and worship
The anarchic powers; and rouse your spirits up
To encounter him.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— But who do ye think will help me?
For all our wealthier people are alarmed,
And terrified at him; and the meaner sort
In a manner stupefied, grown dull and dumb.
DEMOSTHENES.—Why there's a thousand lusty cavaliers,
Ready to back you, that detest and scorn him;
And every worthy well-born citizen;
And every candid critical spectator;
And I myself; and the help of heaven to boot.
And never fear; his face will not be seen,
For all the manufacturers of masks,
From cowardice, refused to model it.

It matters not; his person will be known:
Our audience is a shrewd one—they can guess—

NICIAS [*in alarm from behind the scenes*].—Oh dear! oh dear!
the Paphlagonian's coming.

Enter Cleon with a furious look and voice.

CLEON.—By heaven and earth! you shall abide it dearly,
With your conspiracies and daily plots
Against the sovereign people! Hah! what's this?
What's this Chalcidian goblet doing here?
Are ye tempting the Chalcidians to revolt?[14]
Dogs! villains! every soul of ye shall die.
[*The Sausage-Seller runs off in a fright.*

DEMOSTHENES.—Where are ye going? Where are ye running?
Stop!
Stand firm, my noble valiant Sausage-Seller!
Never betray the cause. Your friends are nigh.
[*Speaks to the Chorus.*
Cavaliers and noble captains! now's the time! advance
in sight!
March in order—make the movement, and out-flank him
on the right! [*Speaks to the Sausage-Seller.*
There I see them bustling, hasting!—only turn and make
a stand,
Stop but only for a moment, your allies are hard at hand.

Enter Chorus of Cavaliers.

CHORUS.—Close around him, and confound him, the confounder
of us all.
Pelt him, pommel him and maul him; rummage, ransack, overhaul him,
Overbear him and out-bawl him; bear him down and
bring him under.
Bellow like a burst of thunder, robber! harpy! sink of
plunder!
Rogue and villain! rogue and cheat! rogue and villain,
I repeat!

[14] The Chalcidians did, in fact, revolt in the following year; their intentions were probably suspected at the time.

Oftener than I can repeat it, has the rogue and villain cheated.
Close around him left and right; spit upon him; spurn and smite:
Spit upon him as you see; spurn and spit at him like me.
But beware, or he'll evade ye, for he knows the private track,
Where Eucrates [15] was seen escaping with the mill dust on his back.

CLEON.—Worthy veterans of the jury, you that either right or wrong,
With my threepenny provision,[16] I've maintained and cherished long,
Come to my aid! I'm here waylaid—assassinated and betrayed!

CHORUS.—Rightly served! we serve you rightly, for your hungry love of pelf,
For your gross and greedy rapine, gormandizing by yourself;
You that ere the figs are gathered, pilfer with a privy twitch
Fat delinquents and defaulters, pulpy, luscious, plump, and rich;
Pinching, fingering, and pulling—tampering, selecting, culling,
With a nice survey discerning, which are green and which are turning,
Which are ripe for accusation, forfeiture, and confiscation.
Him besides, the wealthy man, retired upon an easy rent,
Hating and avoiding party, noble-minded, indolent,
Fearful of official snares, intrigues and intricate affairs;
Him you mark; you fix and hook him, whilst he's gaping unawares;
At a fling, at once you bring him hither from the Chersonese,[17]

[15] He was also an owner of mills, as appears by the Scholiast.
[16] The juryman's fee, a means of subsistence to poor old men driven from their homes by the war.
[17] Of Thrace. Many Athenians possessed estates, and resided there for a quiet life.

Down you cast him, roast and baste him, and devour him at your ease.

CLEON.—Yes! assault, insult, abuse me! this is the return, I find,
For the noble testimony, the memorial I designed:
Meaning to propose proposals, for a monument of stone,
On the which, your late achievements,[18] should be carved and neatly done.

CHORUS.—Out, away with him! the slave! the pompous empty fawning knave!
Does he think with idle speeches to delude and cheat us all?
As he does the doting elders, that attend his daily call.[19]
Pelt him here, and bang him there; and here and there and everywhere.

CLEON.—Save me, neighbors! O the monsters! O my side, my back, my breast!

CHORUS.—What, you're forced to call for help? You brutal overbearing pest.

SAUSAGE-SELLER [*returning to Cleon*].—I'll astound you with my voice; with my bawling looks and noise.

CHORUS.—If in bawling you surpass him, you'll achieve a victor's crown;
If again you overmatch him, in impudence, the day's our own.

CLEON.—I denounce this traitor here, for sailing on clandestine trips,
With supplies of tripe and stuffing, to careen the Spartan ships.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I denounce then and accuse him, for a greater worse abuse:
That he steers his empty paunch, and anchors at the public board!
Running in without a lading, to return completely stored!

CHORUS.—Yes! and smuggles out, moreover, loaves and luncheons not a few,
More than ever Pericles, in all his pride, presumed to do.

CLEON [*in a thundering tone*].—Dogs and villains, you shall die!

[18] In the expedition to Corinth. [19] The veterans of the jury.

SAUSAGE-SELLER [*in a louder, shriller tone*].—Aye! I can
scream ten times as high.
CLEON.—I'll overbear ye, and out-bawl ye.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But I'll out-scream ye, and out-squall ye.
CLEON.—I'll impeach you, whilst aboard,
Commanding on a foreign station.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll have you sliced, and slashed, and scored.
CLEON.—Your lion's skin of reputation,
Shall be flayed off your back and tanned.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll take that heart of yours in hand.
CLEON.—Come, bring your eyes and mine to meet!
And stare at me without a wink!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Yes! in the market-place and street,
I had my birth and breeding too;
And from a boy, to blush or blink,
I scorn the thing as much as you.
CLEON.—I'll denounce you if you mutter.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll douse ye the first word you utter.
CLEON.—My thefts are open and avowed;
And I confess them, which you dare not.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But I can take false oaths aloud,
And in the presence of a crowd;
And if they know the fact I care not.
CLEON.—What! do you venture to invade
My proper calling and my trade?
But I denounce here, on the spot,
The sacrificial tripe you've got;
The tithe it owes was never paid:
It owes a tithe, I say, to Jove;
You've wronged and robbed the powers above.
CHORUS.— Dark and unsearchably profound abyss,
Gulf of unfathomable
Baseness and iniquity!
Miracle of immense,
Intense impudence!
Every court, every hall,
Juries and assemblies, all
Are stunned to death, deafened all,
Whilst you bawl.
The bench and bar

Ring and jar.
Each decree
Smells of thee,
Land and sea
Stink of thee.
Whilst we
Scorn and hate, execrate, abominate,
Thee the brawler and embroiler, of the nation and the State.
You that on the rocky seat of our assembly raise a din,
Deafening all our ears with uproar, as you rave and howl and grin;
Watching all the while the vessels with revenue sailing in.
Like the tunny-fishers perched aloft, to look about and bawl,
When the shoals are seen arriving, ready to secure a haul.

CLEON.—I was aware of this affair, and every stitch of it I know,
Where the plot was cobbled up and patched together, long ago.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Cobbling is your own profession, tripe and sausages are mine:
But the country folks complain,[20] that in a fraudulent design,
You retailed them skins of treaties, that appeared like trusty leather,
Of a peace secure and lasting; but the wear-and-tear and weather
Proved it all decayed and rotten, only fit for sale and show.

DEMOSTHENES.—Yes! a pretty trick he served me; there was I despatched to go,
Trudged away to Pergasæ,[20] but found upon arriving there,
That myself and my commission, both were out at heels and bare.

[20] The allusions in these lines relate to some incidents not recorded in history, some artifice by which Cleon had succeeded in deluding and disappointing the party; the country people in particular (long excluded from the enjoyment of their property) who were anxious for peace.

CHORUS.— Even in your tender years,
And your early disposition,
You betrayed an inward sense
Of the conscious impudence,
Which constitutes a politician.
Hence you squeeze and drain alone the rich milch kine of our allies;
Whilst the son of Hippodamus licks his lips with longing eyes.
But now, with eager rapture we behold
A mighty miscreant of baser mould!
A more consummate ruffian!
An energetic ardent ragamuffin!
Behold him there! He stands before your eyes,
To bear you down, with a superior frown,
A fiercer stare,
And more incessant and exhaustless lies.
CHORUS [*to the Sausage-Seller*].—Now then do you, that boast a birth, from whence you might inherit,
And from your breeding have derived a manhood and a spirit,
Unbroken by the rules of art, untamed by education,
Show forth the native impudence and vigor of the nation!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Well; if you like, then, I'll describe the nature of him clearly,
The kind of rogue I've known him for.
CLEON.— My friend, you're somewhat early.
First give me leave to speak.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I won't, by Jove! Aye. You may bellow!
I'll make you know, before I go, that I'm the baser fellow.
CHORUS.—Aye! stand to that! Stick to the point; and for a further glory,
Say that your family were base, time out mind before ye.
CLEON.—Let me speak first!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— I won't.
CLEON.— You shall, by Jove!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— I won't, by Jove, though!
CLEON.—By Jupiter, I shall burst with rage!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— No matter, I'll prevent you.
CHORUS.—No; don't prevent, for Heaven's sake! Don't hinder him from bursting.

CLEON.—What means—what ground of hope have you—to dare to speak against me?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—What! I can speak! and I can chop—garlic and lard and logic.

CLEON.—Aye! You're a speaker, I suppose! I should enjoy to see you,
Like a pert scullion set to cook—to see your talents fairly
Put to the test, with hot blood-raw disjointed news arriving,
Obliged to hash and season it, and dish it in an instant.
You're like the rest of 'em—the swarm of paltry weak pretenders.
You've made your pretty speech perhaps, and gained a little lawsuit
Against a merchant foreigner, by dint of water-drinking,
And lying long awake o' nights, composing and repeating,
And studying as you walked the streets, and wearing out the patience
Of all your friends and intimates, with practising beforehand:
And now you wonder at yourself, elated and delighted
At your own talent for debate—you silly saucy coxcomb.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—What's your own diet? How do you contrive to keep the city
Passive and hushed—What kind of drink drives ye to that presumption?

CLEON.—Why mention any man besides, that's capable to match me;
That after a sound hearty meal of tunny-fish and cutlets,
Can quaff my gallon; and at once, without premeditation,
With slang and jabber overpower the generals at Pylos.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But I can eat my paunch of pork, my liver and my haslets,
And scoop the sauce with both my hands; and with my dirty fingers
I'll seize old Nicias by the throat, and choke the grand debaters.

CHORUS.—We like your scheme in some respects; but still that style of feeding,
Keeping the sauce all to yourself, appears a gross proceeding.
CLEON.—But I can domineer and dine on mullets at Miletus.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And I can eat my shins of beef, and farm the mines of silver.
CLEON.—I'll burst into the Council House, and storm and blow and bluster.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll blow the wind into your tail, and kick you like a bladder.
CLEON.—I'll tie you neck and heels at once, and kick ye to the kennel.
CHORUS.—Begin with us then! Try your skill!—kicking us all together!
CLEON.—I'll have ye pilloried in a trice.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll have you tried for cowardice.
CLEON.—I'll tan your hide to cover seats.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Yours shall be made a purse for cheats.
The luckiest skin that could be found.
CLEON.—Dog, I'll pin you to the ground
With ten thousand tenter-hooks.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll equip you for the cooks,
Neatly prepared, with skewers and lard.
CLEON.—I'll pluck your eyebrows off, I will.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll cut your collops out, I will.*
DEMOSTHENES.—Yes, by Jove! and like a swine,
Dangling at the butcher's door,
Dress him cleanly, neat, and fine,
Washed and scalded o'er and o'er;
Strutting out in all his pride,
With his carcass open wide,
And a skewer in either side;
While the cook, with keen intent,
By the steady rules of art,
Scrutinizes every part,
The tongue, the throat, the maw, the vent.

* It is evident that a scuffle or wrestling match takes place here, between the two rivals. It continues during the verses of Demosthenes and those of the Chorus, the last of which mark that the Sausage-seller has the advantage; and the Sausage-seller's speech of four lines which follows, implies that he is at the same time exhibiting his adversary in a helpless posture.

CHORUS.—Some element may prove more fierce than fire!
Some viler scoundrel may be seen,
Than ever yet has been!
And many a speech hereafter, many a word,
More villainous, than ever yet was heard.
We marvel at thy prowess and admire!
Therefore proceed!
In word and deed,
Be firm and bold,
Keep steadfast hold!
Only keep your hold upon him. Persevere as you began;
He'll be daunted and subdued; I know the nature of the man.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Such as here you now behold him, all his life has he been known.
Till he reaped a reputation, in a harvest not his own;
Now he shows the sheaves[21] at home, that he clandestinely conveyed,
Tied and bound and heaped together, till his bargain can be made.

CLEON [*released and recovering himself*].—I'm at ease, I need not fear ye, with the Senate on my side,
And the Commons all dejected, humble, poor, and stupefied.

CHORUS.— Mark his visage! and behold,
How brazen, unabashed, and bold!
How the color keeps its place
In his face!

CLEON.—Let me be the vilest thing, the mattress that Cratinus[22] stains;
Or be forced to learn to sing, Morsimus's[23] tragic strains;
If I don't despise and loathe, scorn and execrate ye both.

CHORUS.— Active, eager, airy thing!
Ever hovering on the wing,
Ever hovering and discovering

[21] The Spartan prisoners taken at Pylos, and kept in the most severe confinement.

[22] The famous comic poet, now grown old; and infirm, as it appears.

[23] Ridiculed elsewhere as a bad writer of tragedy.

Golden sweet secreted honey,
Nature's mintage and her money.
May thy maw be purged and scoured,
From the gobbets it devoured;
By the emetic drench of law!
With the cheerful ancient saw,
Then we shall rejoice and sing,
Chanting out with hearty glee,
"Fill a bumper merrily,
For the merry news I bring!"
But he, the shrewd and venerable
Manciple[24] of the public table,
Will chant and chuckle and rejoice,
With heart and voice.

CLEON.—May I never eat a slice, at any public sacrifice,
If your effrontery and pretence, shall daunt my steadfast impudence.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Then, by the memory which I value, of all the bastings in our alley,
When from the dog butcher's tray I stole the lumps of meat away.
I trust to match you with a feat, and do credit to my meat,
Credit to my meat and feeding, and my bringing up and breeding.

CLEON.—Dog's meat! What a dog art thou! But I shall dog thee fast enow.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Then, there were other petty tricks, I practised as a child;
Haunting about the butchers' shops, the weather being mild.
"See, boys," says I, "the swallow there! Why summer's come I say,"
And when they turned to gape and stare, I snatched a steak away.

CHORUS.—A clever lad you must have been, you managed matters rarely,
To steal at such an early day, so seasonably and fairly.

[24] The old butler and steward of the Prytaneum, who had hitherto been used to well-bred company and civil treatment, would be overjoyed at his deliverance from such a guest as Cleon.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But if by chance they spied it, I contrived
to hide it handily;
Clapping it in between my hams, tight and close and
even;
Calling on all the powers above, and all the gods in
heaven;
And there I stood, and made it good, with staring and
forswearing.
So that a statesman of the time, a speaker shrewd and
witty,
Was heard to say, "That boy one day will surely rule
the city."

CHORUS.—'Twas fairly guessed, by the true test, by your address and daring,
First in stealing, then concealing, and again in swearing.

CLEON.—I'll settle ye! Yes, both of ye! the storm of elocution
Is rising here within my breast, to drive you to confusion,
And with a wild commotion, overwhelm the land and
ocean.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Then I shall hand my sausages, and reef
'em close and tight,
And steer away before the wind, and run you out of
sight.

DEMOSTHENES.—And I shall go, to the hold below, to see that
all is right. [*Exit.*

CLEON.— By the holy goddess I declare,
Rogue and robber as you are,
I'll not brook it, or overlook it;
The public treasure that you stole,
I'll force you to refund the whole . . .

CHORUS.—(Keep near and by—the gale grows high.)

CLEON [*in continuation*].— . . . Ten talents, I could prove
it here,
Were sent to you from Potidea.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Well, will you take a single one
To stop your bawling and have done?

CHORUS.—Yes, I'll be bound—he'll compound,
And take a share—the wind grows fair.

This hurricane will overblow,
Fill the sails and let her go!

CLEON.—I'll indict ye, I'll impeach,
I'll denounce ye in a speech;
With four several accusations,
For your former peculations,
Of a hundred talents each.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But I'll denounce ye,
And I'll trounce ye,
With accusations half a score;
Half a score, for having left
Your rank in the army; and for theft
I'll charge ye with a thousand more.

CLEON.—I'll rummage out your pedigree,
And prove that all your ancestry
Were sacrilegious and accurst.[25]

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll prove the same of yours; and first
The foulest treasons and the worst—
Their deep contrivance to conceal
Plots against the common weal;
Which I shall publish and declare—
Publish, and depose, and swear.

CLEON.—Plots, concealed and hidden! Where?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Where? Where plots have always tried
To hide themselves—beneath a hide!

CLEON.—Go for a paltry vulgar slave.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Get out for a designing knave.

CHORUS.—Give him back the cuff you got!

CLEON.—Murder! help! a plot! a plot!
I'm assaulted and beset!

CHORUS.—Strike him harder! harder yet!
Pelt him—rap him,
Slash him—slap him,
Across the chops there, with a wipe
Of your entrails and your tripe!
Keep him down—the day's your own.
O cleverest of human kind! the stoutest and the boldest,

[25] Many of the first families were involved in the guilt of a sacrilegious massacre, committed nearly two hundred years before.

The saviour of the State, and us, the friends that thou beholdest;
No words can speak our gratitude; all praise appears too little.
You've fairly done the rascal up, you've nicked him to a tittle.

CLEON.—By the holy goddess, it's not new to me
This scheme of yours. I've known the job long since,
The measurement and the scantling of it all,
And where it was shaped out and tacked together.

CHORUS.—Aye! There it is! You must exert yourself;
Come, try to match him again with a carpenter's phrase.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Does he think I have not tracked him in his intrigues
At Argos?—his pretence to make a treaty
With the people there?—and all his private parley
With the Spartans?—There he works and blows the coals;
And has plenty of other irons in the fire.

CHORUS.—Well done, the blacksmith beats the carpenter.

SAUSAGE-SELLER [*in continuation*].—And the envoys that come here, are all in a tale;
All beating time to the same tune. I tell ye,
It's neither gold nor silver, nor the promises,
Nor the messages you send me by your friends,
That will ever serve your turn; or hinder me
From bringing all these facts before the public.

CLEON.—Then I'll set off this instant to the Senate;
To inform them of your conspiracies and treasons,
Your secret nightly assemblies and cabals,
Your private treaty with the king of Persia,
Your correspondence with Bœotia,
And the business that you keep there in the cheese-press,
Close packed you think, and ripening out of sight.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Ah! cheese? Is cheese any cheaper there, d'ye hear?

CLEON.—By Hercules! I'll have ye crucified!

[*Exit Cleon.*

CHORUS [*to the Sausage-Seller*].—Well, how do you feel your heart and spirits now?

Rouse up your powers! If ever in your youth
You swindled and forswore as you profess;
The time is come to show it. Now this instant
He's hurrying headlong to the Senate House;
To tumble amongst them like a thunderbolt;
To accuse us all, to rage, and storm, and rave.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Well, I'll be off then. But these entrails and pudding,
I must put them by the while, and the chopping knife.

CHORUS.—Here take this lump of lard, to 'noint your neck with;
The grease will give him the less hold upon you,
With the gripe of his accusations.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— That's well thought of.

CHORUS.—And here's the garlic. Swallow it down!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— What for?

CHORUS.—It will prime you up,[26] and make you fight the better.
Make haste!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— Why, so I do.

CHORUS.— Remember now—
Show blood and game. Drive at him and denounce him!
Dash at his comb, his coxcomb, cuff it soundly!
Peck, scratch, and tear, conculcate, clapperclaw!
Bite both his wattles off, and gobble 'em up!
And then return in glory to your friends.

[*Exit Sausage-Seller.*

CHORUS.— Well may you speed
In word and deed.
May all the powers of the market-place
Grant ye protection, and help, and grace,
With strength of lungs and front and brain;
With a crown of renown, to return again.

[*Turning to the audience.*

But you that have heard and applauded us here,
In every style and in every way,
Grant us an ear, and attend for a while,
To the usual old anapestic essay.

[26] Game-cocks are dieted with garlic.

PARABASIS.

If a veteran author had wished to engage [27]
Our assistance to-day, for a speech from the stage;
We scarce should have granted so bold a request;
But this author of ours, as the bravest and best,
Deserves an indulgence denied to the rest.
For the courage and vigor, the scorn and the hate,
With which he encounters the pests of the State;
A thorough-bred seaman, intrepid and warm,
Steering outright, in the face of the storm.
But now for the gentle reproaches he bore
On the part of his friends, for refraining before
To embrace the profession, embarking for life
In theatrical storms and poetical strife.
He begs us to state, that for reasons of weight,
He has lingered so long, and determined so late.
For he deemed the achievements of comedy hard,
The boldest attempt of a desperate bard!
The Muse he perceived was capricious and coy,
Though many were courting her few could enjoy.
And he saw without reason, from season to season,
Your humor would shift, and turn poets adrift,
Requiting old friends with unkindness and treason,
Discarded in scorn as exhausted and worn.
Seeing Magnes's fate, who was reckoned of late
For the conduct of comedy captain and head;
That so oft on the stage, in the flower of his age,
Had defeated the Chorus his rivals had led;
With his sounds of all sort, that were uttered in sport,
With whims and vagaries unheard of before,
With feathers and wings, and a thousand gay things,
That in frolicsome fancies his Choruses wore—
When his humor was spent, did your temper relent,
To requite the delight that he gave you before?
We beheld him displaced, and expelled and disgraced,
When his hair and his wit were grown aged and hoar.

[27] The whole tenor of this Parabasis turns upon the decisive and irretrievable step, which the poet (after long hesitation, and resisting the importunity of his friends) had at length determined to take, undeterred by the discouraging example of his predecessors in the same line, whom he enumerates and describes, devoting himself irrevocably and exclusively to the composition of comedy.

Then he saw, for a sample, the dismal example
Of noble Cratinus so splendid and ample,
Full of spirit and blood, and enlarged like a flood;
Whose copious current tore down with its torrent,
Oaks, ashes and yew, with the ground where they grew,
And his rivals to boot, wrenched up by the root;
And his personal foes, who presumed to oppose,
All drowned and abolished, dispersed and demolished,
And drifted headlong, with a deluge of song.
And his airs and his tunes, and his songs and lampoons,
Were recited and sung, by the old and the young—
At our feasts and carousals what poet but he?
And "The fair Amphibribe" and "The Sycophant Tree,"
"Masters and masons and builders of verse!"—
Those were the tunes that all tongues could rehearse;
But since in decay, you have cast him away,
Stript of his stops and his musical strings,
Battered and shattered, a broken old instrument,
Shoved out of sight among rubbishy things.
His garlands are faded, and what he deems worst,
His tongue and his palate are parching with thirst;
And now you may meet him alone in the street,
Wearied and worn, tattered and torn,
All decayed and forlorn, in his person and dress;
Whom his former success should exempt from distress,
With subsistence at large, at the general charge,
And a seat with the great, at the table of state,[28]
There to feast every day, and preside at the play
In splendid apparel, triumphant and gay.
Seeing Crates the next, always teased and perplexed,
With your tyrannous temper tormented and vexed;
That with taste and good sense, without waste or expense,
From his snug little hoard, provided your board,
With a delicate treat, economic and neat.
Thus hitting or missing, with crowns or with hissing,
Year after year, he pursued his career,
For better or worse, till he finished his course.

[28] The Prytaneum.

These precedents held him in long hesitation;
He replied to his friends, with a just observation,
"That a seaman in regular order is bred,
To the oar, to the helm, and to look out ahead;
With diligent practise has fixed in his mind
The signs of the weather, and changes of wind.
And when every point of the service is known,
Undertakes the command of a ship of his own."
For reasons like these,
If your judgment agrees,
That he did not embark,
Like an ignorant spark,
Or a troublesome lout,
To puzzle and bother, and blunder about,
Give him a shout,
At his first setting out!
And all pull away
With a hearty huzza
For success to the play!
Send him away,
Smiling and gay,
Shining and florid,
With his bald forehead!

STROPHE.

Neptune, lord of land and deep,
From the lofty Sunian steep,
With delight surveying
The fiery-footed steeds,
Frolicking and neighing
As their humor leads—
And rapid cars contending
Venturous and forward,
Where splendid youths are spending
The money that they borrowed.
Thence downward to the ocean,
And the calmer show
Of the dolphin's motion
In the depths below;
And the glittering galleys

Gallantly that steer,
When the squadron sallies,
With wages in arrear.
List, O list!
Listen and assist,
Thy Chorus here!
Mighty Saturn's son!
The support of Phormion,[29]
In his victories of late;
To the fair Athenian State
More propitious far,
Than all the gods that are,
In the present war.

EPIRRHEMA.

Let us praise our famous fathers, let their glory be recorded
On Minerva's mighty mantle[30] consecrated and embroidered.
That with many a naval action and with infantry by land,
Still contending, never ending, strove for empire and command.
When they met the foe, disdaining to compute a poor account
Of the number of their armies, of their muster and amount:
But whene'er at wrestling matches[31] they were worsted in the fray;
Wiped their shoulders from the dust, denied the fall, and fought away.
Then the generals[32] never claimed precedence, or a separate seat,
Like the present mighty captains; or the public wine or meat.

[29] A most able and successful naval commander.

[30] This mantle was an enormous piece of tapestry adorned with the actions and figures of the naval heroes and protecting deities. It was renewed every year; and was carried to the temple, at the Panathenaic procession, suspended and displayed from a tall mast fixed on a movable carriage.

[31] Thirty-two years before this time, the Athenians, after being foiled in a great battle at Tanagra, risked another general action at Oinophuta, in which they were victorious, only sixty-two days after the first!

[32] Tolmides and Myronides, who commanded in the battles here alluded to.

As for us, the sole pretension suited to our birth and years,
Is with resolute intention, as determined volunteers,
To defend our fields and altars, as our fathers did before;
Claiming as a recompense this easy boon, and nothing more:
When our trials with peace are ended, not to view us with malignity;
When we're curried, sleek and pampered, prancing in our pride and dignity.

ANTISTROPHE.*

Mighty Minerva! thy command
Rules and upholds this happy land;
Attica, famed in every part,
With a renown for arms and art,
Noted among the nations.
Victory bring—the bard's delight;
She that in faction or in fight,
Aids us on all occasions.
Goddess, list to the song! Bring her away with thee,
Haste and bring her along! Here to the play with thee.
Bring fair Victory down for us!
Bring her here with a crown for us!
Come with speed, as a friend indeed,
Now or never at our need!

ANTEPIRRHEMA.†

Let us sing the mighty deeds of our illustrious noble steeds.
They deserve a celebration for their service heretofore,

* It will be seen that there is a want of correspondence and proportion between the strophe and antistrophe; the first has been enlarged, to give scope for the development of the poetic imagery, tinged with burlesque, which appears in the original. In atonement for this irregularity, the antistrophe, which offered no such temptation, is given as an exact metrical facsimile of the original. In this respect, it may at least have some merit as a curiosity. The only variation consists in a triple, instead of a double, rhyme.

† It is observable, that the antepirrhema is generally in a lower and less serious tone than its preceding epirrhema; as if the poet were, or thought it right to appear, apprehensive of having been over-earnest in his first address. In the present instance, as the poetical advocate of his party, he had already stated their claims to public confidence and favor; and, in the concluding lines, had deprecated the jealousy and envy to which they were exposed. He now wishes to give a striking instance of their spirit and alacrity in the service of the country; and it is given accordingly, in the most uninvidious manner, in a tone of extravagant burlesque humor.

Charges and attacks, exploits enacted in the days of yore:
These, however, strike me less, as having been performed ashore.
But the wonder was to see them, when they fairly went aboard,
With canteens and bread and onions, victualled and completely stored,
Then they fixed and dipped their oars beginning all to shout and neigh,
Just the same as human creatures, "Pull away, boys! Pull away!"
"Bear a hand there, Roan and Sorrel! Have a care there, Black and Bay!
Then they leapt ashore at Corinth; and the lustier younger sort
Strolled about to pick up litter,[83] for their solace and disport:
And devoured the crabs of Corinth, as a substitute for clover.
So that a poetic Crabbe,[84] exclaimed in anguish "All is over!
What awaits us, mighty Neptune, if we cannot hope to keep
From pursuit and persecution in the land or in the deep."

CHORUS [*to the Sausage-Seller*].—
O best of men! thou tightest heartiest fellow!
What a terror and alarm had you created
In the hearts of all your friends by this delay.
But since at length in safety you return,
Say what was the result of your attempt.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—The result is; you may call me Nicko-boulus;
For I've nicked the Boule there, the Senate, capitally.

CHORUS.— Then we may chant amain
In an exulting strain,
With ecstasy triumphant bold and high,
O thou!
That not in words alone, or subtle thought,

[83] The usual licentious excesses of an invading army.
[84] The poet Carkinus.

But more in manly deed,
Hast merited, and to fair achievement brought!
Relate at length and tell
The event as it befell:
So would I gladly pass a weary way;
Nor weary would it seem,
Attending to the theme,
Of all the glories of this happy day.
Come, my jolly worthy fellow, never fear!
We're all delighted with you—let us hear!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Aye, aye—It's well worth hearing, I can tell ye:
I followed after him to the Senate House;
And there was he, storming, and roaring, driving
His thunderbolts about him, bowling down
His biggest words, to crush the cavaliers,
Like stones from a hill-top; calling them traitors,
Conspirators—what not? There sat the Senate
With their arms folded, and their eyebrows bent,
And their lips puckered, with the grave aspect
Of persons utterly humbugged and bamboozled.
Seeing the state of things, I paused awhile,
Praying in secret with an under voice:
"Ye influential impudential powers
Of sauciness and jabber, slang and jaw!
Ye spirits of the market-place and street,
Where I was reared and bred—befriend me now!
Grant me a voluble utterance, and a vast
Unbounded voice, and steadfast impudence!"
Whilst I thus thought and prayed, on the right hand,
I heard a sound of wind distinctly broken!
I seized the omen at once; and bouncing up,
I burst among the crowd, and bustled through,
And bolted in at the wicket, and bawled out:
"News! news! I've brought you news! the best of news!
Yes, Senators, since first the war began,
There never has been known, till now this morning,
Such a haul of pilchards." Then they smiled and seemed
All tranquillized and placid at the prospect

Of pilchards being likely to be cheap.
I then proceeded and proposed a vote
To meet the emergence secretly and suddenly:
To seize at once the trays of all the workmen,
And go with them to market to buy pilchards,
Before the price was raised. Immediately
They applauded, and sat gaping all together,
Attentive and admiring. He perceived it;
And framed a motion, suited as he thought
To the temper of the Assembly. "I move," says he,
"That on occasion of this happy news,
We should proclaim a general thanksgiving;
With a festival moreover, and a sacrifice
Of a hundred head of oxen; to the goddess."
Then seeing he meant to drive me to the wall
With his hundred oxen, I overbid him at once;
And said "two hundred," and proposed a vow,
For a thousand goats to be offered to Diana,
Whenever sprats should fall to forty a penny.
With that the Senate smiled upon me again;
And he grew stupefied and lost, and stammering;
And attempting to interrupt the current business,
Was called to order, and silenced and put down.
Then they were breaking up to buy their pilchards:
But he must needs persist, and beg for a hearing—
"For a single moment—for a messenger—
For a herald that was come from Lacedæmon,
With an offer of peace—for an audience to be given him."
But they broke out in an uproar all together:
"Peace truly! Peace forsooth! Yes, now's their time;
I warrant 'em; when pilchards are so plenty.
They've heard of it; and now they come for peace!
No! No! No peace! The war must take its course."
Then they called out to the Presidents to adjourn;
And scrambled over the railing and dispersed;
And I dashed down to the market-place headlong;
And bought up all the fennel, and bestowed it
As donative, for garnish to their pilchards,
Among the poorer class of Senators;

And they so thanked and praised me, that in short,
For twenty-pence, I've purchased and secured them.
CHORUS.—With fair event your first essay began,
Betokening a predestined happy man.
The villain now shall meet
In equal war,
A more accomplished cheat,
A viler far;
With turns and tricks more various,
More artful and nefarious.
But thou!
Bethink thee now;
Rouse up thy spirit to the next endeavor!
Our hands and hearts and will,
Both heretofore and ever,
Are with thee still.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—The Paphlagonian! Here he's coming, foaming
And swelling like a breaker in the surf!
With his hobgoblin countenance and look;
For all the world as if he'd swallow me up.

Enter Cleon.

CLEON.—May I perish and rot, but I'll consume and ruin ye;
I'll leave no trick, no scheme untried to do it.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—It makes me laugh, it amuses one, to see him
Bluster and storm! I whistle and snap my fingers.
CLEON.—By the powers of earth and heaven! and as I live!
You villain, I'll annihilate and devour ye.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Devour me! and as I live, I'll swallow ye;
And gulp ye down at a mouthful, without salt.
CLEON.—I swear by the precedence, and the seat
Which I achieved at Pylos, I'll destroy ye.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Seat, precedence truly! I hope to see you,
The last amongst us in the lowest place.
CLEON.—I'll clap you in jail, in the stocks—By heaven! I will.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—To see it how it takes on! Barking and tearing!
What ails the creature? Does it want a sop?

CLEON.—I'll claw your entrails out, with these nails of mine.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll pare those nails of yours, from clawing victuals
At the public table.
CLEON.— I'll drag you to the Assembly
This instant, and accuse ye, and have you punished.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And I'll bring accusations there against you,
Twenty for one, and worse than yours tenfold.
CLEON.—Aye—my poor soul! but they won't mind ye or hear ye,
Whilst I can manage 'em and make fools of 'em.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—You reckon they belong to ye, I suppose?
CLEON.—Why should not they, if I feed and diet 'em?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Aye, aye, and like the licorice-greedy nurses,
You swallow ten for one yourself at least,
For every morsel the poor creatures get.
CLEON.—Moreover, in doing business in the Assembly,
I have such a superior influence and command,
That I can make them close and hard and dry,
Or pass a matter easily, as I please.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Moreover, in doing business—my band,
Has the same sort of influence and command;
And plays at fast and loose, just as it pleases.
CLEON.—You sha'n't insult as you did before the Senate.
Come, come, before the Assembly.
SAUSAGE-SELLER [*coolly and dryly*].—Aye—yes—why not?
With all my heart! Let's go there—What should hinder us?
CLEON.—My dear good Demus, do step out a moment![85]
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—My dearest little Demus, do step out!
DEMUS.—Who's there? Keep off! What a racket are you making;
Bawling and caterwauling about the door;
To affront the house, and scandalize the neighbors.
CLEON.—Come out, do see yourself, how I'm insulted.
DEMUS.—Oh, my poor Paphlagonian! What's the matter?
Who has affronted ye?

[85] The scene is supposed to be in front of Demus's house.

CLEON.— I'm waylaid and beaten,
By that rogue there, and the rake-helly young fellows,
All for your sake.
DEMUS.— How so?
CLEON.— Because I love you,
And court you, and wait on you, to win your favor.
DEMUS.—And you there, sirrah! tell me what are you?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—A lover of yours, and a rival of his, this long time;
That have wished to oblige ye and serve ye in every way:
And many there are besides, good gentlefolks,
That adore ye, and wish to pay their court to ye;
But he contrives to baffle and drive them off,
In short, you're like the silly spendthrift heirs,
That keep away from civil well-bred company,
To pass their time with grooms and low companions,
Cobblers, and curriers, tanners, and such like.
CLEON.—And have not I merited that preference,
By my service?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— In what way?
CLEON.— By bringing back
The Spartan captives tied and bound from Pylos.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And would not I bring back from the cook's shop
A mess of meat that belonged to another man?
CLEON.—Well, Demus, call an Assembly then directly,
To decide between us, which is your best friend;
And when you've settled it, fix and keep to him.
[*Exit Cleon.*
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Ah, do! pray do decide!—but not in the Pnyx—
DEMUS.—It must be there; it can't be anywhere else;
It's quite impossible: you must go to the Pnyx.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Oh dear! I'm lost and ruined then! the old fellow
Is sharp and clever enough in his own home;
But planted with his feet upon that rock,
He grows completely stupefied and bothered.
CHORUS.—Now you must get your words and wit, and all your tackle ready,

To make a dash, but don't be rash, be watchful, bold and steady.
You've a nimble adversary, shifting, and alert, and wary.

[*The scene changes and discovers the Pnyx with Cleon on the Bema, in an oratorical attitude.*]

Look out! have a care! behold him there![86]
He's bearing upon you—be ready, prepare.
Out with the dolphin! Haul it hard!
Away with it up to the peak of the yard!
And out with the pinnace[87] to serve for a guard.

CLEON.—To Minerva the sovereign goddess I call,
Our guide and defender, the hope of us all;
With a prayer and a vow, that, even as now,
If I'm truly your friend, unto my life's end,
I may dine in the hall, doing nothing at all!
But, if I despise you, or ever advise you,
Against what is best, for your comfort and rest;
Or neglect to attend you, defend you, befriend you,
May I perish and pine; may this carcass of mine
Be withered and dried, and curried beside;
And straps for your harness cut out from the hide.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Then, Demus—if I, tell a word of a lie;
If any man more can dote or adore,
With so tender a care, I make it my prayer,
My prayer and my wish, to be stewed in a dish;
To be sliced and slashed, minced and hashed;
And the offal remains that are left by the cook,
Dragged out to the grave, with my own flesh-hook.

CLEON.—O Demus! has any man shown such a zeal,
Such a passion as I for the general weal?
Racking and screwing offenders to ruin;
With torture and threats extorting your debts;
Exhausting all means for enhancing your fortune,
Terror and force and entreaties importune,
With a popular, pure, patriotical aim;
Unmoved by compassion, or friendship, or shame.

[86] Observe that the change of the scene is accompanied by the idea of naval manœuvre.

[87] The image is that of a merchant vessel defending itself against the attack of a ship of war: the pinnace was interposed to break the shock of the enemy's prow.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—All this I can do; more handily too;
With ease and despatch; I can pilfer and snatch,
And supply ye with loaves from another man's batch.
But now, to detect his saucy neglect;
(In spite of the boast, of his loyalty due,
Is the boiled and the roast, to your table and you.)
You—that in combat at Marathon sped,
And hewed down your enemies hand over head,
The Mede and the Persian, achieving a treasure
Of infinite honor and profit and pleasure,
Rhetorical praises and tragical phrases;
Of rich panegyric a capital stock—
He leaves you to rest on a seat of the rock,
Naked and bare, without comfort or care.
Whilst I—look ye there!—have quilted and wadded,
And tufted and padded this cushion so neat
To serve for your seat! Rise now, let me slip
It there under your hip, that on board of the ship,
With the toil of the oar, was blistered and sore,
Enduring the burden and heat of the day,
At the battle of Salamis working away.

DEMUS.—Whence was it you came! Oh, tell me your name—
Your name and your birth; for your kindness and worth
Bespeak you indeed of a patriot breed;
Of the race of Harmodius[88] sure you must be,
So popular, gracious and friendly to me.

CLEON.—Can he win you with ease, with such trifles as these?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—With easier trifles you manage to please.

CLEON.—I vow notwithstanding, that never a man
Has acted since first the republic began,
On a more patriotical popular plan:
And if any man else can as truly be said
The friend of the people, I'll forfeit my head;
I'll make it a wager, and stand to the pledge.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And what is the token you mean to allege
Of that friendship of yours, or the good it insures?
Eight seasons are past that he shelters his head
In a barrack, an outhouse, a hovel, a shed,

[88] The assassin of Hipparchus, canonized by the democratic fanaticism of the Athenians.

In nests of the rock where the vultures are bred,
In tubs, and in huts and the towers of the wall:
His friend and protector, you witness it all!
But where is thy pity, thou friend of the city;
To smoke him alive, to plunder his hive?
And when Archeptolemus[39] came on a mission,
With peace in his hand, with a fair proposition:
So drive them before you with kicks on the rump,
Peace, treaties and embassies, all in a lump!

CLEON.—I did wisely and well; for the prophecies tell,
That if he perseveres, for a period of years,
He shall sit in Arcadia, judging away
In splendor and honor, at five-pence a day:
Meantime I can feed and provide for his need;
Maintaining him wholly, fairly and foully,
With jurymen's pay, three-pence a day.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—No vision or fancy prophetic have you,
Nor dreams of Arcadian empire in view;
A safer concealment is all that you seek:
In the hubbub of war, in the darkness and reek,
To plunder at large; to keep him confined,
Passive, astounded, humbled, blind,
Pining in penury, looking to thee,
For his daily provision a juryman's fee.
But if he returns to his country concerns,
His grapes and his figs, and his furmety kettle,
You'll find him a man of a different mettle.
When he feels that your fees had debarred him from these;
He'll trudge up to town, looking eagerly down,
And pick a choice pebble, and keep it in view,
As a token of spite,[40] for a vote against you.
Peace sinks you forever, you feel it and know,
As your shifts and your tricks and your prophecies show.

CLEON.—'Tis a scandal, a shame! to throw slander and blame
On the friend of the people! a patriot name,
A kinder protector, I venture to say,

[39] After the surrender of the Spartans at Pylos.

[40] "As a token of spite:" that is, as a memorandum of anticipated vengeance.

Than ever Themistocles was in his day,
Better and kinder in every way.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Witness, ye deities! witness his blasphemies!
You to compare with Themistocles! you!
That found us exhausted, and filled us anew
With a bumper of opulence; carving and sharing
Rich slices of empire; and kindly preparing,
While his guests were at dinner, a capital supper,
With a dainty remove, both under and upper,
The fort and the harbor, and many a dish
Of colonies, islands, and such kind of fish.
But now we are stunted, our spirit is blunted,
With paltry defences, and walls of partition;
With silly pretences of poor superstition;
And yet you can dare, with him to compare!
But he lost the command, and was banished the land,
While you rule over all, and carouse in the hall!

CLEON.—This is horrible quite, and his slanderous spite,
Has no motive in view but my friendship for you,
My zeal—

DEMUS.— There have done with your slang and your stuff,
You've cheated and choused and cajoled me enough.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—My dear little Demus! you'll find it is true.
He behaves like a wretch and a villain to you.
He haunts your garden and there he plies,
Cropping the sprouts of the young supplies,
Munching and scrunching enormous rations
Of public sales and confiscations.

CLEON.—Don't exult before your time,
Before you've answered for your crime—
A notable theft that I mean to prove
Of a hundred talents and above.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Why do ye plounce and flounce in vain?
Splashing and dashing and splashing again,
Like a silly recruit, just clapped on board?
Your crimes and acts are on record:
The Mitylenian bribe alone
Was forty minæ proved and shown.

CHORUS.—O thou, the saviour of the State, with joy and admiration!
We contemplate your happy fate and future exaltation,
Doomed with the trident in your hand to reign in power and glory,
In full career to domineer, to drive the world before ye;
To raise with ease and calm the seas, and also raise a fortune,
While distant tribes, with gifts and bribes, to thee will be resorting.
Keep your advantage, persevere, attack him, work him, bait him,
You'll over-bawl him, never fear, and out-vociferate him.
CLEON.—You'll not advance; you've not a chance, good people, of prevailing;
Recorded facts, my warlike acts, will muzzle you from railing;
As long as there remains a shield, of all the trophy taken
At Pylos, I can keep the field, unterrified, unshaken.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Stop there a bit, don't triumph yet—those shields afford a handle
For shrewd surmise; and it implies a treasonable scandal;
That there they're placed, all strapped and braced, ready prepared for action;
A plot it is! a scheme of his! a project of the faction!
Dear Demus, he, most wickedly, with villainous advisement,
Prepares a force, as his resource, against your just chastisement:
The curriers and the tanners all, with sundry crafts of leather,
Young lusty fellows stout and tall, you see them leagued together;
And there beside them, there abide cheesemongers bold and hearty,
Who with the grocers are allied, to join the tanner's party.
Then if you turn your oyster eye, with ostracising look,
Those his allies, will from the pegs, those very shields unhook:

Rushing outright, at dark midnight, with insurrection sudden,
To seize perforce the public stores, with all your meal and pudden.

DEMUS.—Well I declare! the straps are there! O what a deep, surprising,
Uncommon rascal! What a plot the wretch has been devising.

CLEON.—Hear and attend, my worthy friend, and don't directly credit
A tale for truth, because forsooth—"The man that told me, said it."
You'll never see a friend like me, that well or ill rewarded,
Has uniformly done his best, to keep you safely guarded;
Watching and working night and day, with infinite detections
Of treasons and conspiracies, and plots in all directions.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Yes, that's your course, your sole resource, the same device forever.
As country fellows fishing eels, that in the quiet river,
Or the clear lake, have failed to take, begin to poke and muddle,
And rouse and rout it all about and work it to a puddle
To catch their game—you do the same in the hubbub and confusion,
Which you create to blind the State, with unobserved collusion,
Grasping at ease your bribes and fees. But answer! Tell me whether
You, that pretend yourself his friend, with all your wealth in leather,
Ever supplied a single hide, to mend his reverend battered
Old buskins?

DEMUS.— No, not he, by Jove! Look at them, burst and tattered!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—That shows the man! now spick and span, behold, my noble largess!
A lovely pair, bought for your wear, at my own cost and charges.

DEMUS.—I see your mind is well inclined, with views and temper suiting,
To place the state of things and toes, upon a proper footing.
CLEON.—What an abuse! a pair of shoes to purchase your affection!
Whilst all my worth is blotted forth, raised from your recollection;
That was your guide, so proved and tried, that showed myself so zealous,
And so severe this very year, and of your honor jealous,
Noting betimes all filthy crimes, without respect or pity.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—He that's inclined to filth, may find enough throughout the city:
A different view determined you; those infamous offenders
Seemed in your eyes, likely to rise, aspirants and pretenders;
In bold debate, and ready prate, undaunted rhetoricians;
In impudence and influence, your rival politicians.
But there now, see! this winter he might pass without his clothing;
The season's cold, he's chilly and old; but still you think of nothing!
Whilst I, to show my love, bestow this waistcoat, as a present
Comely and new, with sleeves thereto, of flannel warm and pleasant.
DEMUS.—How strange it is! Themistocles was reckoned mighty clever!
With all his wit, he could not hit on such a project ever,
Such a device, so warm, so nice; in short, it equals fairly
His famous wall, the port and all, that he contrived so rarely.
CLEON.—To what a pass you drive me, alas! to what a vulgar level!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—'Tis your own plan; 'twas you began. As topers at a revel,
Pressed on a sudden, rise at once, and seize without regarding,

Their neighbors' slippers for the nonce, to turn into the garden.
I stand, in short, upon your shoes—I copy your behavior,
And take and use, for my own views, your flattery and palaver.

CLEON.—I shall outvie your flatteries, I!—see here this costly favor!
This mantle! take it for my sake—

DEMUS.— Faugh! what a filthy flavor!
Off with it quick! it makes me sick, it stinks of hides and leather.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—'Twas by design: if you'll combine and put the facts together,
Like his device of Silphium spice — pretending to bedizen
You with a dress! 'Twas nothing less, than an attempt to poison.
He sunk the price of that same spice, and with the same intention—
You recollect?

DEMUS.— I recollect the circumstance you mention.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Then recollect the sad effect!—that instance of the jury
All flushed and hot, fixed to the spot, exploding in a fury.
To see them was a scene of woe, in that infectious smother,
Winking and blinking in a row, and poisoning one another.

CLEON.—Varlet and knave! thou dirty slave! what trash have you collected?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—'Tis your own cue—I copy you. So the Oracle directed.

CLEON.—I'll match you still, for I can fill his pint-pot of appointment,
For holidays and working-days.[41]

[41] Donatives on festival days, when the courts were closed and the jurymen's pay suspended.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— But here's a box of ointment—
A salve prescribed for heels when kibed, given with my humble duty.
CLEON.—I'll pick your white hairs out of sight, and make you quite a beauty.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But here's a prize, for your dear eyes!—a rabbit-scut! See there now!
CLEON.—Wipe 'em, and then, wipe it again, dear Demus, on my hair now.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—On mine, I say! On mine, do, pray!
[*Demus bestows, in a careless manner, his dirty preference upon the Sausage-Seller. He pays no attention to the altercation which follows, but remains in the attitude of a solid old juryman, sitting upon a difficult cause, concocting the decision which he at last pronounces.*]
CLEON.—I shall fit you with a ship,
To provide for and equip,
One that has been long forgotten,
Leaky, worm-eaten, and rotten,
On it you shall waste and spend
Time and money without end.
Furthermore, if I prevail,
It shall have a rotten sail.
CHORUS.—There he's foaming, boiling over:
See the froth above the cover.
This combustion to allay,
We must take some sticks away.
CLEON.—I shall bring you down to ruin,
With my summoning and suing
For arrear of taxes due,
And charges and assessments new,
In the census you shall pass
Rated in the richest class.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I reply with nothing worse
Than this just and righteous curse.
May you stand beside the stove,[42]
With the fishes that you love,
Fizzling in the tempting pan,

[42] It is to be presumed that Cleon is indulging himself in the Prytaneum.

A distracted anxious man;
The Milesian question [43] pending,
Which you then should be defending,
With a talent for your hire
If you gain what they desire.
Then their agent, in a sweat,
Comes to say the Assembly's met;
All in haste you snatch and follow,
And in vain attempt to swallow;
Running with your gullet filled,
Till we see you choked and killed.

CHORUS.—So be it, mighty Jove! so be it!
And holy Ceres, may I live to see it!

DEMUS [*rousing himself gradually from his meditation*].—
. . . In truth and he seems to me, by far the best—
The worthiest that has been long since—the kindest,
And best disposed, to the honest sober class
Of simple humble three-penny citizens.
You, Paphlagonian, on the contrary
Have offended and incensed me. Therefore now
Give back your seal of office! You must be
No more my steward!

CLEON.— Take it! and withal
Bear this in mind! That he, my successor,
Whoever he may be, will prove a rascal
More artful and nefarious than myself—
A bigger rogue be sure, and baser far!

DEMUS.—This seal is none of mine, or my eyes deceive me—
The figure's not the same! I'm sure!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— Let's see—
What was the proper emblem upon your seal?

DEMUS.—A sirloin of roast beef—

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— It is not that—

DEMUS.—Not the roast beef! What is it?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— A cormorant
Haranguing open-mouthed upon a rock [44]—

DEMUS.—Oh mercy!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— What's the matter?

[43] The Scholiast affords us no light as to the allusion to the Milesian question.

[44] The Pnyx, the place of assembly, was called the Rock.

DEMUS.— Away with it!
That was Cleonymus's seal, not mine [45]—
But here take this, act with it as my steward.
CLEON.—Not yet, sir! I beseech you. First permit me
To communicate some oracles I possess.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And me too, some of mine.
CLEON.— Beware of them!
His oracles are most dangerous and infectious!
They strike ye with the leprosy and the jaundice.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And his will give you the itch, and a scald head;
And the glanders and mad-staggers! take my word for it!
CLEON.—My oracles foretell, that you shall rule
Over all Greece, and wear a crown of roses.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And mine foretell, that you shall wear a robe
With golden spangles, and a crown of gold,
And ride in a golden chariot over Thrace;
In triumph with king Smicythes and his queen.
CLEON [*to the Sausage-Seller*].—Well, go for 'em! and bring 'em! and let him hear 'em!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Yes, sure—and you too—go fetch yours!
CLEON.— Heigh-day!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Heigh-day! Why should not ye? What should hinder ye?
[*Exeunt Cleon and Sausage-Seller.*
CHORUS.—Joyful will it be and pleasant
To the future times and present,
The benignant happy day,
Which will shine on us at last,
Announcing with his genial ray,
That Cleon is condemned and cast!
Notwithstanding we have heard
From the seniors of the city,[46]
Jurymen revered and feared,
An opinion deep and pithy:

[45] Cleonymus's emblem is a bird, to mark his cowardice. The bird is also one of voracious habits.

[46] There was a portion of the lower class of citizens who conceived that the State had an interest in supporting the tyrannical exactions of Cleon.

That the State for household use
Wants a pestle and a mortar;
That Cleon serves to pound and bruise,
Or else our income would run shorter.
But I was told, the boys at school
Observed it as a kind of rule,
That he never could be made
By any means to play the lyre,
Till he was well and truly paid—
I mean with lashes for his hire.
At length his master all at once
Expelled him as an utter dunce;
As by nature ill inclined,
And wanting gifts of every kind.

Re-enter Cleon and the Sausage-Seller—Cleon with a large packet and the Sausage-Seller staggering under a porter's load.

CLEON [*to Demus*].—Well, there's a bundle you see, I've brought of 'em;
But that's not all; there's more of them to come—
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I grunt and sweat, you see, with the load of 'em;
But that's not all; there's more of 'em to come.
DEMUS.—But what are these?—all?
CLEON.— Oracles.
DEMUS.— What, all?
CLEON.—Ah, you're surprised, it seems, at the quantity!
That's nothing; I've a trunk full of 'em at home.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And I've a garret and out-house both brimful.
DEMUS.—Let's give 'em a look. Whose oracles are these?
CLEON.—Bakis's mine are.
DEMUS [*to the Sausage-Seller*].—Well, and whose are yours?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Mine are from Glanis, Bakis's elder brother.
DEMUS.—And what are they all about?
CLEON.— About the Athenians,
About the Island of Pylos—about myself—
About yourself—about all kinds of things.
DEMUS.—And what are yours about?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— About the Athenians—
About pease-pudding and porridge—about the Spartans—
About the war—about the pilchard fishery—
About the state of things in general—
About short weights and measures in the market—
About all things and persons whatsoever—
About yourself and me. Bid him go whistle.

DEMUS.—Come, read them out then! that one in particular,
My favorite one of all, about the eagle;
About my being an eagle in the clouds.

CLEON.—Listen then! Give your attention to the Oracle!
"Son of Erechtheus, mark and ponder well,
This holy warning from Apollo's cell.
It bids thee cherish, him the sacred whelp;
Who for thy sake doth bite and bark and yelp.
Guard and protect him from the chattering jay;
So shall thy juries all be kept in pay."

DEMUS.—That's quite above me! Erechtheus and a whelp!
What should Erechtheus do with a whelp or a jay?
What does it mean?[47]

CLEON.— The meaning of it is this:
I am presignified as a dog, who barks
And watches for you. Apollo therefore bids you
Cherish the sacred whelp—meaning myself.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I tell ye, the Oracle means no such thing:
This whelp has gnawed the corner off; but here,
I've a true perfect copy.

DEMUS.— Read it out then!
Meanwhile I'll pick a stone up for the nonce,
For fear the dog in the Oracle should bite me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—"Son of Erechtheus, 'ware the gap-toothed dog,
The crafty mongrel that purloins thy prog;
Fawning at meals, and filching scraps away,
The whilst you gape and stare another way;
He prowls by night, and pilfers many a prize,
Amidst the sculleries and the colonies."

[47] Discussions on the genuine and corrupt copies of oracles were not unfrequent; we find an instance in Thucydides.

DEMUS.—Well, Glanis has the best of it, I declare.
CLEON.—First listen, my good friend, and then decide:
" In sacred Athens shall a woman dwell,
Who shall bring forth a lion fierce and fell;
This lion shall defeat the gnats and flies,
Which are that noble nation's enemies.
Him you must guard and keep for public good,
With iron bulwarks and a wall of wood."
DEMUS [*to the Sausage-Seller*].—D'ye understand it?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— No, not I, by Jove!
CLEON.—Apollo admonishes you, to guard and keep me;
I am the lion here alluded to.
DEMUS.—A lion! Why just now you were a dog!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Aye, but he stifles the true sense of it,
Designedly—that " wooden and iron wall,"
In which Apollo tells ye he should be kept.
DEMUS.—What did the deity mean by it? What d'ye think?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—To have him kept in the pillory and the stocks.
DEMUS.—That prophecy seems likely to be verified.
CLEON.—" Heed not their strain; for crows and daws abound,
But love your faithful hawk, victorious found,
Who brought the Spartan magpies tied and bound."
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—" The Paphlagonian, impudent and rash,
Risked that adventure in a drunken dash.
O simple son of Cecrops, ill advised!
I see desert in arms unfairly prized:
Men only can secure and kill the game;
A woman's deed it is to cook the same."
CLEON.—Do listen at least to the Oracle about Pylos:
" Pylos there is behind, and eke before,[48]
The bloody Pylos."
DEMUS.— Let me hear no more!
Those Pyloses are my torment evermore.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But here's an Oracle which you must attend to;
About the navy—a very particular one.
DEMUS.—Yes, I'll attend—I wish it would tell me how
To pay my seamen their arrears of wages.

[48] There were three places of this name, not very distant from each other.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—"O son of Egeus, ponder and beware
Of the dog-fox, so crafty, lean, and spare,
Subtle and swift." Do ye understand it?
DEMUS.— Yes!
Of course the dog-fox [49] means Philostratus.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—That's not the meaning—but the Paphlagonian
Is always urging you to send out ships;
Cruising about exacting contributions;
A thing that Apollo positively forbids.
DEMUS.—But why are the ships here called dog-foxes?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— Why?
Because the ships are swift, and dogs are swift.
DEMUS.—But what has a fox to do with it? Why dog-foxes?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—The fox is a type of the ship's crew; marauding
And eating up the vineyards.
DEMUS.— Well, so be it!
But how are my foxes to get paid their wages?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll settle it all, and make provision for them,
Three days' provision, presently. Only now,
This instant, let me remind you of an Oracle:
"Beware Cullene."
DEMUS.— What's the meaning of it?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Cullene, in the sense I understand,
Implies a kind of a culling, asking hand—
The coiled hand of an informing bully,
Culling a bribe from his affrighted cully,[50]
A hand like his.
CLEON.— No, no! you're quite mistaken,
It alludes to Diopithes's lame hand.[51]
"But here's a glorious prophecy which sings,
How you shall rule on earth, and rank with kings,
And soar aloft in air on eagle's wings."

[49] The dog was (in a bad sense) the type of impudence—the fox of cunning; Philostratus, the compound of the two, gained his subsistence by a very infamous trade.

[50] The Scholiast tells us that the common informer at Athens, when accosting and threatening persons for the purpose of extortion, had an established token (the hand hollowed and slipped out beneath the cloak), indicating that they were willing to desist for a piece of money.

[51] As a soothsayer he ought to have been free from any bodily defect.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—" And some of mine foretell that you shall be,
Sovereign of all the world and the Red Sea;
And sit on juries in Ecbatana,
Munching sweet buns and biscuit all the day."
CLEON.—" But me Minerva loves, and I can tell
Of a portentous vision that befell—
The goddess in my sleep appeared to me,
Holding a flagon, as it seemed to be,
From which she poured upon the old man's crown
Wealth, health, and peace, like ointment running down."
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—" And I too dreamt a dream, and it was this:
Minerva came from the Acropolis,
There came likewise, her serpent and her owl;
And in her hand she held a certain bowl;
And poured ambrosia on the old man's head,
And salt-fish pickle upon yours instead."
DEMUS.—Well, Glanis is the cleverest after all.
And therefore I'm resolved, from this time forth,
To put myself into your charge and keeping;
To be tended in my old age and taken care of.
CLEON.—No, do pray wait a little; and see how regularly
I'll furnish you with a daily dole of barley.
DEMUS.—Don't tell me of barley! I can't bear to hear of it!
I've been cajoled and choused more than enough,
By Thouphanes [52] and yourself this long time past.
CLEON.—Then I'll provide you delicate wheaten flour.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And I'll provide you manchets, and roast meat,
And messes piping hot that cry " Come eat me."
DEMUS.—Make haste then, both of ye. Whatever you do—
And whichever of the two befriends me most,
I'll give him up the management of the State.
CLEON.—Well, I'll be first then.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— No, you sha'n't, 'tis I.
[*Both run off; but the Sausage-Seller contrives to get the start.*
CHORUS.— Worthy Demus! your estate
Is a glorious thing we own—
The haughtiest of the proud and great
Watch and tremble at your frown;

[52] An adherent of Cleon.

Like a sovereign or a chief,
But so easy of belief.
Every fawning rogue and thief
Finds you ready to his hand,
Flatterers you cannot withstand.
To them your confidence is lent,
With opinions always bent
To what your last advisers say,
Your noble mind is gone astray.

DEMUS.—Those brains of yours are weak and green;
My wits are sound whate'er ye say:
'Tis nothing but my froward spleen
That affects this false decay:
'Tis my fancy, 'tis my way,
To drawl and drivel through the day.
But though you see me dote and dream,
Never think me what I seem!
For my confidential slave
I prefer a pilfering knave;
And when he's pampered and full-blown;
I snatch him up and—dash him down!

CHORUS.—We approve of your intent,
If you spoke it as you meant;
If you keep them like the beasts,
Fattened for your future feasts,
Pampered in the public stall,
Till the next occasion call;
Then a little easy vote
Knocks them down, and cuts their throat;
And you dish and serve them up,
As you want to dine or sup.

DEMUS.—Mark me!—When I seem to doze,
When my wearied eyelids close;
Then they think their tricks are hid:
But beneath the drooping lid,
Still I keep a corner left,
Tracing every secret theft.
I shall match them by and by!
All the rogues, you think so sly,
All the deep intriguing set,

Are but dancing in a net,[52]
Till I purge their stomachs clean
With the hemlock and the bean.

The Sausage-Seller and Cleon re-enter separately.

CLEON.—Get out there!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— You, get out yourself! you rascal!
CLEON.—O Demus! here have I been waiting, ready
To attend upon ye and serve ye, a long, long time.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—And I've been waiting a longer, longer time—
Ever so long—a great long while ago.
DEMUS.—And I've been waiting here cursing ye both,
A thousand times, a long, long time ago.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—You know what you're to do?
DEMUS.— Yes, yes, I know;
But you may tell me, however, notwithstanding.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Make it a race, and let us start to serve you,
And win your favor without loss of time.
DEMUS.—So be it. Start now—one! two! three!
CLEON.— Heigh-day!
DEMUS.—Why don't you start?
CLEON.— He's cheated and got before me.
[*Exit.*
DEMUS.—Well truly indeed I shall be feasted rarely;
My courtiers and admirers will quite spoil me.
CLEON.—There, I'm the first you see to bring ye a chair.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But a table. Here I've brought it, first and foremost.
CLEON.—See here this little half-meal cake from Pylos,
Made from the flour of victory and success.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—But here's a cake! see here! which the heavenly goddess
Patted and flatted herself, with her ivory hand,
For your own eating.
DEMUS.— Wonderful, mighty goddess!
What an awfully large hand she must have had!

[52] Persons subject to an effectual restraint, of which they were themselves unaware, were said to be dancing in a net.

CLEON.—See this pease-pudding, which the warlike virgin
Achieved at Pylos, and bestows upon you.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—The goddess upholds your whole establishment,
And holds this mess of porridge over your head.
DEMUS.—I say the establishment could not subsist
For a single hour, unless the goddess upheld
The porridge of our affairs, most manifestly.
CLEON.—She, the dread virgin who delights in battle,
And storm and battery, sends this batter-pudding.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—This savory stew, with comely sippets decked,
Is sent you by the Gorgon-bearing goddess,
Who bids you gorge and gormandize thereon.
CLEON.—The daughter of Jove arrayed in panoply
Presents you a pancake to create a panic
Amongst your enemies.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— And by me she sends
For your behoof this dainty dish of fritters,
Well fried, to strike your foemen with affright;
And here's a cup of wine—taste it and try.
DEMUS.—It's capital, faith!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— And it ought to be; for Pallas
Mixed it herself expressly for your palate.
CLEON.—This slice of rich sweet-cake, take it from me.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—This whole great rich sweet-cake, take it from me.
CLEON [*to the Sausage-Seller*].—Ah, but hare-pie—where will you get hare-pie?
SAUSAGE-SELLER [*aside*].—Hare-pie! What shall I do!—Come, now's the time,
Now for a nimble, knowing, dashing trick.
CLEON [*to the Sausage-Seller, showing the dish which he is going to present*].—Look there, you poor rapscallion.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— Pshaw! no matter.
I've people of my own there in attendance.
They're coming here—I see them.
CLEON.— Who? What are they?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Envoys with bags of money.

[*Cleon sets down his hare-pie, and runs off the stage to intercept the supposed envoys.*]

CLEON.— Where? Where are they?
Where? Where?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— What's that to you? Can't ye be civil?
Why don't you let the foreigners alone?
There's a hare-pie, my dear own little Demus,
A nice hare-pie, I've brought ye! See, look there!

CLEON [*returning*].—By Jove, he's stolen it, and served it up.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Just as you did the prisoners at Pylos.

DEMUS.—Where did ye get it? How did ye steal it? Tell me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—The scheme and the suggestion were divine,
The theft and the execution simply mine.

CLEON.—I took the trouble.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— But I served it up.

DEMUS.—Well, he that brings the thing must get the thanks.

CLEON [*aside*].—Alas, I'm circumvented and undone
Out-faced and over-impudentified.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Come, Demus, had not you best decide at once,
Which is your truest friend, and best disposed
To the interest of the State, to your belly and you.

DEMUS.—But how can I decide it cleverly?
Which would the audience think is the cleverest way?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I'll tell ye; take my chest and search it fairly,
Then search the Paphlagonian's and determine.

DEMUS.—Let's look; what's here?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— It's empty, don't you see?
My dear old man, I've given you everything.

DEMUS.—Well, here's a chest indeed, in strict accordance
With the judgment of the public; perfectly empty!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Come now, let's rummage out the Paphlagonian's.
See there!

DEMUS.—Oh bless me, what a hoard of dainties!
And what a lump of cake the fellow has kept,
Compared with the little tiny slice he gave me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—That was his common practice; to pretend
To make you presents, giving up a trifle,
To keep the biggest portion for himself.
DEMUS.—O villain, how you've wronged and cheated me;
Me that have honored ye, and have made ye presents.
CLEON.—I stole on principle for the public service.
DEMUS.—Pull off your garland—give it back to me,
For him to wear!
SAUSAGE-SELLER.— Come, sirrah, give it back!
CLEON.—Not so. There still remains an Oracle,
Which marks the fatal sole antagonist,
Predestined for my final overthrow.
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Yes! And it points to me, my name and person!
CLEON.—Yet would I fain inquire and question you;
How far the signs and tokens of the prophecy
Combine in your behalf. Answer me truly!
What was your early school? Where did you learn
The rudiments of letters and of music?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Where hogs are singed and scalded in the shambles,
There was I pommelled to a proper tune.
CLEON.—Ha, say'st thou so? this prophecy begins
To bite me to the soul with deep forebodings.
Yet tell me again—What was your course of practice
In feats of strength and skill at the Palæstra?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Stealing and staring, perjuring and swearing.
CLEON.—O mighty Apollo, your decree condemns me!
Say, what was your employment afterwards?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—I practised as a Sausage-Seller chiefly,
Occasionally as pimp and errand-boy.
CLEON.—Oh misery! lost and gone! totally lost!
One single hope remains, a feeble thread,
I grasp it to the last. Yet answer me:
What was your place of sale for sausages?
Was it the market or the city gate?
SAUSAGE-SELLER.—The city gate! Where salted fish are sold!
CLEON.—Out! out alas! my destiny is fulfilled:
Hurry me hence within with quick conveyance,

The wreck and ruin of my former self.
Farewell my name and honors! Thou, my garland,
Farewell! my successor must wear you now,
To shine in new pre-eminence—a rogue,
Perhaps less perfect, but more prosperous!

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—O Jove! Patron of Greece! the praise be thine!

DEMOSTHENES.—I wish you joy most heartily; and I hope,
Now you're promoted, you'll remember me,
For helping you to advancement. All I ask
Is Phanus's place to be under-scrivener to you.

DEMUS [*to the Sausage-Seller*].—You tell me what's your name?

SAUSAGE-SELLER.— Agoracritus;
So called from the Agora where I got my living.

DEMUS.—With you then, Agoracritus, in your hands
I place myself; and furthermore consign
This Paphlagonian here to your disposal.

SAUSAGE-SELLER.—Then you shall find me, a most affectionate
And faithful guardian; the best minister
That ever served the sovereign of the Cockneys.
[*Exeunt Omnes.*

CHORUS.*—To record to future years
The lordly wealthy charioteers,
Steeds, and cars, and crowns victorious,
These are worthy themes and glorious.
Let the Muse refrain from malice,
Nor molest with idle sallies
Him the poor Lysistratus;
Taunted for his empty purse,
Every penny gone and spent,
Lately with Thaumantis sent
On a Delphic embassy,
With a tear in either eye,
Clinging to the deity
To bemoan his misery.

* The actors being withdrawn, the Chorus remain again in possession of the theatre. Their first song is a parody from Pindar, which is converted into a lampoon upon Lysistratus, who having reduced himself to poverty had procured (by the assistance of his friends) a lucrative appointment at Delphi.

EPIRRHEMA.*

To revile the vile, has ever been accounted just and right,
The business of the comic bard, his proper office, his delight.
On the villainous and base, the lashes of invective fall;
While the virtuous and the good are never touched or harmed at all.
Thus, without offence, to mark a profligate and wicked brother,
For the sake of explanation, I proceed to name another:
One is wicked and obscure, the brother unimpeached and glorious,
Eminent for taste and art, a person famous and notorious.
Arignotus—when I name him, you discern at once, with ease,
The viler and obscurer name, the person meant—Ariphrades,
If he were a rascal only we should let the wretch alone,
He's a rascal, and he knows it, and desires it to be known.
Still we should not have consented to lampoon him into vogue,
As an ordinary rascal, or a villain, or a rogue;
But the wretch is grown inventive, eager to descend and try
Undiscovered, unattempted depths of filth and infamy;
With his nastiness and lewdness, going on from bad to worse,
With his verses and his music, and his friend Oionychus.
Jolly friends and mates of mine, when with me you quench your thirst,
Spit before you taste the wine—spit upon the fellow first.
Meditating on my bed,
Strange perplexities are bred
In my weary, restless head.
I contemplate and discuss

* An attempt is here made to express what the Scholiast points out; namely, that the contrast between the two brothers is a piece of dry irony. In other respects the original is hardly capable of translation.

The nature of Cleonymus,
All the modes of his existence,
His provision and subsistence,
His necessities and wants,
And the houses that he haunts,
Till the master of the table,
Accosts him like the gods in fable,
Manifested and adored
At Baucis's and Philemon's board—
"Mighty sovereign! Mighty lord!
Leave us in mercy and grace. Forbear!
Our frugal insufficient fare,
Pardon it! and in mercy spare!"

ANTEPIRRHEMA.

Our Triremes, I was told, held a conference of late,
One, a bulky dame and old, spoke the first in the debate:
"Ladies, have you heard the news? In the town it passed for truth,
That a certain lowbred upstart, one Hyperbolus forsooth,
Asks a hundred of our number, with a further proposition,
That we should sail with him to Carthage [54] on a secret expedition."
They all were scandalized and shocked to hear so wild a project planned,
A virgin vessel newly docked, but which never had been manned,
Answered instantly with anger, "If the Fates will not afford me,
Some more suitable proposal, than that wretch to come aboard me,
I would rather rot and perish, and remain from year to year,
Till the worms have eat my bottom, lingering in the harbor here.

[54] Carthage, in this instance, may admit of a doubt, but it was by no means beyond the speculations of Athenian ambition at that time.

No, thank heaven, for such a master Nauson's daughter
is too good;
And if my name were not Nauphantis, I am made of
nails and wood.
I propose then to retire in sanctuary to remain
Near the temple of the Furies, or to Theseus and his fane.
Still the project may proceed; Hyperbolus can never fail.
He may launch the trays of wood, in which his lamps
were set to *sale.*"

Enter Agoracritus (the Sausage-Seller).

AGORACRITUS.—Peace be amongst you! Silence! Peace!
Close the courts; let pleading cease!
All your customary joys,
Juries, accusers, strife and noise!
Be merry, I say! Let the theatre ring
With a shout of applause for the news that I bring.
CHORUS.—O thou the protector and hope of the State,
Of the isles and allies of the city, relate
What happy event, do you call us to greet,
With bonfire and sacrifice filling the street.
AGORACRITUS.—Old Demus within has moulted his skin;
I've cooked him, and stewed him, to render him stronger,
Many years younger, and shabby no longer.
CHORUS.—Oh, what a change! How sudden and strange!
But where is he now?
AGORACRITUS.— On the citadel's brow,
In the lofty old town of immortal renown,
With the noble Ionian violet crown.
CHORUS.—What was his vesture, his figure and gesture?
How did you leave him, and how does he look?
AGORACRITUS.—Joyous and bold, as when feasting of old,
When his battles were ended, triumphant and splendid,
With Miltiades sitting carousing at rest,
Or good Aristides his favorite guest.
You shall see him here strait; for the citadel gate
Is unbarred; and the hinges—you hear how they grate!

[*The scene changes to a view of the Propylæum.*]

Give a shout for the sight of the rocky old height!
And the worthy old wight, that inhabits within!

CHORUS.—Thou glorious hill! pre-eminent still
For splendor of empire and honor and worth!
Exhibit him here, for the Greeks to revere;
Their patron and master the monarch of earth!

AGORACRITUS.—There, see him, behold! with the jewels of gold
Entwined in his hair, in the fashion of old;
Not dreaming of verdicts or dirty decrees;
But lordly, majestic, attired at his ease,
Perfuming all Greece with an odor of peace.

CHORUS.—We salute you, and greet you, and bid you rejoice;
With unanimous heart, with unanimous voice,
Our sovereign lord, in glory restored,
Returning amongst us in royal array,
Worthy the trophies of Marathon's day!

[*Demus comes forward in his splendid old-fashioned attire: the features of his mask are changed to those of youth, and his carriage throughout this scene is marked with the characteristics of youth, warmth, eagerness, and occasional bashfulness and embarrassment.*]

DEMUS.—My dearest Agoracritus, come here—
I'm so obliged to you for your cookery!
I feel an altered man, you've quite transformed me.

AGORACRITUS.—What! I? That's nothing; if you did but know
The state you were in before, you'd worship me.

DEMUS.—What was I doing? How did I behave?
Do tell me—inform against me—let me know.

AGORACRITUS.—Why first, then: if an orator in the Assembly
Began with saying, Demus, I'm your friend,
Your faithful zealous friend, your only friend,
You used to chuckle, and smirk, and hold your head up.

DEMUS.—No sure!

AGORACRITUS.—So he gained his end, and bilked and choused ye.

DEMUS.—But did not I perceive it? Was not I told?

AGORACRITUS.—By Jove, and you wore those ears of yours continually
Wide open or close shut, like an umbrella.

DEMUS.—Is it possible? Was I indeed so mere a driveller
In my old age, so superannuated?

AGORACRITUS.—Moreover, if a couple of orators
Were pleading in your presence; one proposing
To equip a fleet, his rival arguing
To get the same supplies distributed
To the jurymen, the patron of the juries
Carried the day. But why do you hang your head so?
What makes you shuffle about? Can't ye stand still?
DEMUS.—I feel ashamed of myself and all my follies.
AGORACRITUS.—'Twas not your fault—don't think of it. Your advisers
Were most to blame. But for the future—tell me,
If any rascally villainous orator
Should address a jury with such words as these:
"Remember, if you acquit the prisoner
Your daily food and maintenance are at stake,"
How would you treat such a pleader? Answer me.
DEMUS.—I should toss him headlong into the public pit,
With a halter round his gullet, and Hyperbolus
Tied fast to the end of it.
AGORACRITUS.— That's a noble answer!
Wise and judicious, just and glorious!
Now tell me, in other respects, how do you mean
To manage your affairs?
DEMUS.— Why first of all
I'll have the arrears of seamen's wages paid
To a penny, the instant they return to port.
AGORACRITUS.—There's many a worn-out rump will bless ye and thank ye.
DEMUS.—Moreover, no man that has been enrolled
Upon the list for military service,
Shall have his name erased for fear or favor.
AGORACRITUS.—That gives a bang to Cleonymus's buckler.
DEMUS.—I'll not permit those fellows without beards
To harangue in our Assembly; boys or men.
AGORACRITUS.—Then what's to become of Cleisthenes and Strato?
Where must they speak?
DEMUS.— I mean those kind of youths,
The little puny would-be politicians,
Sitting conversing in perfumers' shops,

Lisping and prating in this kind of way:
" Phæax is sharp—he made a good come-off,
And saved his life in a famous knowing style.
I reckon him a first-rate; quite capital
For energy and compression; so collected,
And such a choice of language! Then to see him
Battling against a mob—it's quite delightful!
He's never cowed! He bothers 'em completely!"

AGORACRITUS.—It's your own fault, in part you've helped to spoil 'em;
But what do you mean to do with 'em for the future?

DEMUS.—I shall send them into the country, all the pack of 'em,
To learn to hunt, and leave off making laws.

AGORACRITUS.—Then I present you here with a folding chair,
And a stout lad to carry it after you.

DEMUS.—Ah, that reminds one of the good old times.

AGORACRITUS.—But what will you say, if I give you a glorious peace,
A lusty strapping truce of thirty years?
Come forward here, my lass, and show yourself.

DEMUS.—By Jove, what a face and figure! I should like
To ratify and conclude incontinently.
Where did you find her?

AGORACRITUS.— Oh, the Paphlagonian,
Of course, had huddled her out of sight, within there.
But now you've got her, take her back with you
Into the country.

DEMUS.— But the Paphlagonian,
What shall we do to punish him? What d'ye think?

AGORACRITUS.—Oh, no great matter. He shall have my trade;
With an exclusive sausage-selling patent,
To traffic openly at the city gates,
And garble his wares with dogs' and asses' flesh;
With a privilege, moreover, to get drunk,
And bully among the strumpets of the suburbs,
And the ragamuffin waiters at the baths.

DEMUS.—That's well imagined, it precisely suits him;
His natural bent, it seems, his proper element
To squabble with poor trulls and low rapscallions.
As for yourself, I give you an invitation

To dine with me in the hall. You'll fill the seat
Which that unhappy villain held before.
Take this new robe! Wear it and follow me!
And you, the rest of you, conduct that fellow
To his future home and place of occupation,
The gate of the city; where the allies and foreigners,
That he maltreated, may be sure to find him.

[*Exeunt.*

LIFE A DREAM

—

BY

PEDRO CALDERON

[*Translated into English blank verse by Edward Fitzgerald*]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

BASILIO, King of Poland.
SEGISMUND, his Son.
ASTOLFO, his Nephew.
ESTRELLA, his Niece.
CLOTALDO, a General in Basilio's service.
ROSAURA, a Muscovite lady.
FIFE, her Attendant.

Chamberlain, Lords in waiting, Officers, Soldiers, etc., in Basilio's service.

The scene of the first and third acts lies on the Polish frontier: of the second act, in Warsaw.

LIFE A DREAM

ACT FIRST

SCENE I.—*A pass of rocks, over which a storm is rolling away, and the sun setting: in the foreground, half way down, a fortress. Enter first, from the topmost rock, Rosaura, as from horseback, in man's attire; and, after her, Fife.**

ROSAURA.—There, four-footed Fury, blast-
engender'd brute, without the wit
Of brute, or mouth to match the bit
Of man—art satisfied at last?
Who, when thunder roll'd aloof,
Tow'rd the spheres of fire your ears
Pricking, and the granite kicking
Into lightning with your hoof,
Among the tempest-shatter'd crags
Shattering your luckless rider
Back into the tempest pass'd?
There then lie to starve and die,
Or find another Phaeton
Mad-mettled as yourself; for I,
Wearied, worried, and for-done,
Alone will down the mountain try,
That knits his brows against the sun.

FIFE [*as to his mule*].—There, thou misbegotten thing,

* As this version of Calderon's drama is not for acting, a higher and wider mountain-scene than practicable may be imagined for Rosaura's descent in the first act and the soldier's ascent in the last. The bad watch kept by the sentinels who guarded their state-prisoner, together with much else (not all!) that defies sober sense in this wild drama, I must leave Calderon to answer for; whose audience were not critical of detail and probability, so long as a good story, with strong, rapid, and picturesque action and situation, was set before them.

Long-ear'd lightning, tail'd tornado,
Griffin-hoof-in hurricano—
(I might swear till I were almost
Hoarse with roaring Asonante)
Who forsooth because your betters
Would begin to kick and fling—
You forthwith your noble mind
Must prove, and kick me off behind,
Tow'rd the very centre whither
Gravity was most inclined.
There where you have made your bed
In it lie; for, wet or dry,
Let what will for me betide you,
Burning, blowing, freezing, hailing;
Famine waste you: devil ride you:
Tempest baste you black and blue:—
[*To Rosaura*] There! I think in downright railing
I can hold my own with you.

ROSAURA.—Ah, my good Fife, whose merry loyal pipe,
Come weal, come woe, is never out of tune—
What, you in the same plight too?

FIFE.— Ay;
And madam—sir—hereby desire,
When you your own adventures sing
Another time in lofty rhyme,
You don't forget the trusty squire
Who went with you Don-quixoting.

ROSAURA.—Well, my good fellow—to leave Pegasus,
Who scarce can serve us than our horses worse—
They say no one should rob another of
The single satisfaction he has left
Of singing his own sorrows; one so great,
So says some great philosopher, that trouble
Were worth encount'ring only for the sake
Of weeping over—what perhaps you know
Some poet calls the "luxury of woe."

FIFE.—Had I the poet or philosopher
In place of her that kick'd me off to ride,
I'd test his theory upon his hide.
But no bones broken, madam—sir, I mean?—

ROSAURA.—A scratch here that a handkerchief will heal—
And you?—
FIFE.— A scratch in quiddity, or kind:
But not in "quo"—my wounds are all behind.
But, as you say, to stop this strain,
Which, somehow, once one's in the vein,
Comes clattering after—there again!—
What are we twain—deuce take 't!—we two,
I mean, to do—drench'd through and through—
Oh, I shall choke of rhymes, which I believe
Are all that we shall have to live on here.
ROSAURA.—What, is our victual gone too?—
FIFE.— Ay, that brute
Has carried all we had away with her,
Clothing, and cate, and all.
ROSAURA.— And now the sun,
Our only friend and guide, about to sink
Under the stage of earth.
FIFE.— And enter Night,
With Capa y Espada—and—pray heav'n!—
With but her lanthorn also.
ROSAURA.— Ah, I doubt
To-night, if any, with a dark one—or
Almost burnt out after a month's consumption.
Well! well or ill, on horseback or afoot,
This is the gate that lets me into Poland;
And, sorry welcome as she gives a guest
Who writes his own arrival on her rocks
In his own blood—
Yet better on her stony threshold die,
Than live on unrevenged in Muscovy.
FIFE.—Oh what a soul some women have—I mean,
Some men—
ROSAURA.— Oh, Fife, Fife, as you love me, Fife,
Make yourself perfect in that little part,
Or all will go to ruin!
FIFE.— Oh, I will,
Please God we find someone to try it on.
But, truly, would not any one believe

Some fairy had exchanged us as we lay
Two tiny foster-children in one cradle?

ROSAURA.—Well, be that as it may, Fife, it reminds me
Of what perhaps I should have thought before,
But better late than never—You know I love you,
As you, I know, love me, and loyally
Have follow'd me thus far in my wild venture:
Well! now then—having seen me safe thus far—
Safe if not wholly sound—over the rocks
Into the country where my business lies—
Why should not you return the way we came,
The storm all clear'd away, and, leaving me
(Who now shall want you, though not thank you, less,
Now that our horses gone) this side the ridge,
Find your way back to dear old home again;
While I—Come, come!—
What, weeping, my poor fellow?—

FIFE.— Leave you here
Alone—my Lady—Lord! I mean my Lord—
In a strange country—among savages—
Oh, now I know—you would be rid of me
For fear my stumbling speech—

ROSAURA.— Oh, no, no, no!—
I want you with me for a thousand sakes
To which that is as nothing—I myself
More apt to let the secret out myself
Without your help at all—Come, come, cheer up!
And if you sing again, "Come weal, come woe,"
Let it be that; for we will never part
Until you give the signal.

FIFE.— 'Tis a bargain.

ROSAURA.—Now to begin, then. "Follow, follow me,
"You fairy elves that be."

FIFE.— Ay, and go on—
Something of "following darkness like a dream,"
For that we're after.

ROSAURA.— No, after the sun;
Trying to catch hold of his glittering skirts
That hang upon the mountain as he goes.

FIFE.—Ah, he's himself past catching—as you spoke

He heard what you were saying, and—just so—
Like some scared water-bird,
As we say in my country, *dōve* below.

ROSAURA.—Well, we must follow him as best we may.
Poland is no great country, and, as rich
In men and means, will but few acres spare
To lie beneath her barrier mountains bare.
We cannot, I believe, be very far
From mankind or their dwellings.

FIFE.— Send it so!
And well provided for man, woman, and beast.
No, not for beast. Ah, but my heart begins
To yearn for her—

ROSAURA.— Keep close, and keep your feet
From serving you as hers did.

FIFE.— As for beasts,
If in default of other entertainment,
We should provide them with ourselves to eat—
Bears, lions, wolves—

ROSAURA.— Oh, never fear.

FIFE.— Or else,
Default of other beasts, beastlier men,
Cannibals, Anthropophagi, bare Poles
Who never knew a tailor but by taste.

ROSAURA.—Look, look! Unless my fancy misconceive
With twilight—down among the rocks there, Fife—
Some human dwelling, surely—
Or think you but a rock torn from the rocks
In some convulsion like to-day's, and perch'd
Quaintly among them in mock-masonry?

FIFE.—Most likely that, I doubt.

ROSAURA.— No, no—for look!
A square of darkness opening in it—

FIFE.— Oh,
I don't half like such openings!—

ROSAURA.— Like the loom
Of night from which she spins her outer gloom—

FIFE.—Lord, Madam, pray forbear this tragic vein
In such a time and place—

ROSAURA.— And now again

Within that square of darkness, look! a light
That feels its way with hesitating pulse,
As we do, through the darkness that it drives
To blacken into deeper night beyond.

FIFE.—In which could we follow that light's example,
As might some English Bardolph with his nose,
We might defy the sunset—Hark, a chain!

ROSAURA.—And now a lamp, a lamp! And now the hand
That carries it.

FIFE.— Oh, Lord! that dreadful chain!

ROSAURA.—And now the bearer of the lamp; indeed
As strange as any in Arabian tale,
So giant-like, and terrible, and grand,
Spite of the skin he's wrapt in.

FIFE.— Why, 'tis his own:
Oh, 'tis some wild man of the woods; I've heard
They build and carry torches—

ROSAURA.— Never Ape
Bore such a brow before the heav'ns as that—
Chain'd as you say too!—

FIFE.— Oh, that dreadful chain!

ROSAURA.—And now he sets the lamp down by his side,
And with one hand clench'd in his tangled hair
And with a sigh as if his heart would break—

[*During this Segismund has entered from the fortress, with a torch.*

SEGISMUND.—Once more the storm has roar'd itself away,
Splitting the crags of God as it retires;
But sparing still what it should only blast,
This guilty piece of human handiwork,
And all that are within it. Oh, how oft,
How oft, within or here abroad, have I
Waited, and in the whisper of my heart
Pray'd for the slanting hand of heav'n to strike
The blow myself I dared not, out of fear
Of that Hereafter, worse, they say, than here,
Plunged headlong in, but, till dismissal waited,
To wipe at last all sorrow from men's eyes,
And make this heavy dispensation clear.
Thus have I borne till now, and still endure,

Crouching in sullen impotence day by day,
Till some such outburst of the elements
Like this rouses the sleeping fire within;
And standing thus upon the threshold of
Another night about to close the door
Upon one wretched day to open it
On one yet wretcheder because one more;—
Once more, you savage heav'ns, I ask of you—
I, looking up to those relentless eyes
That, now the greater lamp is gone below,
Begin to muster in the listening skies;
In all the shining circuits you have gone
About this theatre of human woe,
What greater sorrow have you gazed upon
Than down this narrow chink you witness still;
And which, did you yourselves not fore-devise,
You register'd for others to fulfil!

FIFE.—This is some Laureate at a birthday ode;
No wonder we went rhyming.

ROSAURA.— Hush! And now,
See, starting to his feet, he strides about
Far as his tether'd steps—

SEGISMUND.— And if the chain
You help'd to rivet round me did contract
Since guiltless infancy from guilt in act;
Of what in aspiration or in thought
Guilty, but in resentment of the wrong
That wreaks revenge on wrong I never wrought
By excommunication from the free
Inheritance that all created life,
Beside myself, is born to—from the wings
That range your own immeasurable blue,
Down to the poor, mute, scale-imprison'd things,
That yet are free to wander, glide, and pass
About that under-sapphire, whereinto
Yourselves transfusing you yourselves englass!

ROSAURA.—What mystery is this?

FIFE.— Why, the man's mad:
That's all the mystery. That's why he's chain'd—
And why—

SEGISMUND.— Nor Nature's guiltless life alone—
But that which lives on blood and rapine; nay,
Charter'd with larger liberty to slay
Their guiltless kind, the tyrants of the air
Soar zenith-upward with their screaming prey,
Making pure heav'n drop blood upon the stage
Of under earth, where lion, wolf, and bear,
And they that on their treacherous velvet wear
Figure and constellation like your own,*
With their still living slaughter bound away
Over the barriers of the mountain cage,
Against which one, blood-guiltless, and endued
With aspiration and with aptitude
Transcending other creatures, day by day
Beats himself mad with unavailing rage!

FIFE.—Why, that must be the meaning of my mule's
Rebellion—

ROSAURA.— Hush!

SEGISMUND.— But then if murder be
The law by which not only conscience-blind
Creatures, but man too prospers with his kind;
Who leaving all his guilty fellows free,
Under your fatal auspice and divine
Compulsion, leagued in some mysterious ban
Against one innocent and helpless man,
Abuse their liberty to murder mine:
And sworn to silence, like their masters mute
In heav'n, and like them twiring through the mask
Of darkness, answering to all I ask,
Point up to them whose work they execute!

ROSAURA.—Ev'n as I thought, some poor unhappy wretch,
By man wrong'd, wretched, unrevenged, as I!
Nay, so much worse than I, as by those chains
Clipt of the means of self-revenge on those
Who lay on him what they deserve. And I,
Who taunted Heav'n a little while ago
With pouring all its wrath upon my head—

* "Some report that they"—(panthers)—"have one marke on the shoulders resembling the moone, growing and decreasing as she doth, sometimes showing a full compasse, and otherwhiles hollowed and pointed with tips like the hornes."—Philemon Holland's "Pliny," b. viii. c. 17.

Alas! like him who caught the cast-off husk
Of what another bragg'd of feeding on,
Here's one that from the refuse of my sorrows
Could gather all the banquet he desires!
Poor soul, poor soul!

FIFE.— Speak lower—he will hear you.

ROSAURA.—And if he should, what then? Why, if he would,
He could not harm me—Nay, and if he could,
Methinks I'd venture something of a life
I care so little for—

SEGISMUND.—Who's that? Clotaldo? Who are you, I say,
That, venturing in these forbidden rocks,
Have lighted on my miserable life,
And your own death?

ROSAURA.— You would not hurt me, surely?

SEGISMUND.—Not I; but those that, iron as the chain
In which they slay me with a lingering death,
Will slay you with a sudden—Who are you?

ROSAURA.—A stranger from across the mountain there,
Who, having lost his way in this strange land
And coming night, drew hither to what seem'd
A human dwelling hidden in these rocks,
And where the voice of human sorrow soon
Told him it was so.

SEGISMUND.— Ay? But nearer—nearer—
That by this smoky supplement of day
But for a moment I may see who speaks
So pitifully sweet.

FIFE.— Take care! take care!

ROSAURA.—Alas, poor man, that I, myself so helpless,
Could better help you than by barren pity,
And my poor presence—

SEGISMUND.— Oh, might that be all!
But that—a few poor moments—and, alas!
The very bliss of having, and the dread
Of losing, under such a penalty
As every moment's having runs more near,
Stifles the very utterance and resource
They cry for quickest; till from sheer despair
Of holding thee, methinks myself would tear
To pieces—

FIFE.— There, his word's enough for it.
SEGISMUND.—Oh, think, if you who move about at will,
And live in sweet communion with your kind,
After an hour lost in these lonely rocks
Hunger and thirst after some human voice
To drink, and human face to feed upon;
What must one do where all is mute, or harsh,
And ev'n the naked face of cruelty
Were better than the mask it works beneath?—
Across the mountain then! Across the mountain!
What if the next world which they tell one of
Be only next across the mountain then,
Though I must never see it till I die,
And you one of its angels?
ROSAURA.— Alas! Alas!
No angel! And the face you think so fair,
'Tis but the dismal frame-work of these rocks
That makes it seem so; and the world I come from—
Alas, alas, too many faces there
Are but fair vizors to black hearts below,
Or only serve to bring the wearer woe!
But to yourself—If haply the redress
That I am here upon may help to yours.
I heard you tax the heav'ns with ordering,
And men for executing, what, alas!
I now behold. But why, and who they are
Who do, and you who suffer—
SEGISMUND [*pointing upwards*].— Ask of them,
Whom, as to-night, I have so often ask'd,
And ask'd in vain.
ROSAURA.— But surely, surely—
SEGISMUND.— Hark!
The trumpet of the watch to shut us in.
Oh, should they find you!—Quick! Behind the rocks!
To-morrow—if to-morrow—
ROSAURA [*flinging her sword toward him*].—Take my sword!

Rosaura and Fife hide in the rocks; enter Clotaldo.

CLOTALDO.—These stormy days you like to see the last of
Are but ill opiates, Segismund, I think,

For night to follow: and to-night you seem
More than your wont disorder'd. What! A sword?
Within there!

Enter Soldiers with black vizors and torches.

FIFE.—Here's a pleasant masquerade!
CLOTALDO.—Whosoever watch this was
Will have to pay head-reckoning. Meanwhile,
This weapon had a wearer. Bring him here,
Alive or dead.
SEGISMUND.— Clotaldo! good Clotaldo!—
CLOTALDO [*to Soldiers who enclose Segismund; others searching the rocks*].—You know your duty.
SOLDIERS [*bringing in Rosaura and Fife*].—Here are two of them,
Whoever more to follow—
CLOTALDO.— Who are you,
That in defiance of known proclamation
Are found, at night-fall too, about this place?
FIFE.—Oh, my Lord, she—I mean he—
ROSAURA.— Silence, Fife,
And let me speak for both. Two foreign men,
To whom your country and its proclamations
Are equally unknown; and, had we known,
Ourselves not masters of our lawless beasts
That, terrified by the storm among your rocks,
Flung us upon them to our cost—
FIFE.— My mule—
CLOTALDO.—Foreigners? Of what country?
ROSAURA.— Muscovy.
CLOTALDO.—And whither bound?
ROSAURA.— Hither—if this be Poland;
But with no ill design on her, and therefore
Taking it ill that we should thus be stopt
Upon her threshold so uncivilly.
CLOTALDO.—Whither in Poland?
ROSAURA.— To the capital.
CLOTALDO.—And on what errand?
ROSAURA.— Set me on the road,
And you shall be the nearer to my answer.

CLOTALDO [*aside*].—So resolute and ready to reply,
And yet so young—and—[*aloud*] Well—
Your business was not surely with the man
We found you with?
ROSAURA.— He was the first we saw—
And strangers and benighted, as we were,
As you too would have done in a like case,
Accosted him at once.
CLOTALDO.— Ay, but this sword?
ROSAURA.—I flung it toward him.
CLOTALDO.— Well, and why?
ROSAURA.— And why?
But to revenge himself on those who thus
Injuriously misuse him.
CLOTALDO.— So—so—so!
'Tis well such resolution wants a beard—
And, I suppose, is never to attain one.
Well, I must take you both, you and your sword,
Prisoners.
FIFE [*offering a cudgel*].—Pray take mine, and welcome, sir;
I'm sure I gave it to that mule of mine
To mighty little purpose.
ROSAURA.— Mine you have;
And may it win us some more kindliness
Than we have met with yet.
CLOTALDO [*examining the sword*].—More mystery!
How came you by this weapon?
ROSAURA.— From my father.
CLOTALDO.—And do you know whence he?
ROSAURA.— Oh, very well:
From one of this same Polish realm of yours,
Who promised a return, should come the chance,
Of courtesies that he received himself
In Muscovy, and left this pledge of it—
Not likely yet, it seems, to be redeem'd.
CLOTALDO [*aside*].—Oh, wondrous chance—or wondrous Providence!
The sword that I myself in Muscovy,
When these white hairs were black, for keepsake left
Of obligation for a like return

To him who saved me wounded as I lay
Fighting against his country; took me home;
Tended me like a brother till recover'd,
Perchance to fight against him once again—
And now my sword put back into my hand
By his—if not his son—still, as so seeming,
By me, as first devoir of gratitude,
To seem believing, till the wearer's self
See fit to drop the ill-dissembling mask.
[*Aloud*] Well, a strange turn of fortune has arrested
The sharp and sudden penalty that else
Had visited your rashness or mischance:
In part, your tender youth too—pardon me,
And touch not where your sword is not to answer—
Commends you to my care; not your life only,
Else by this misadventure forfeited;
But ev'n your errand, which by happy chance,
Chimes with the very business I am on,
And calls me to the very point you aim at.

ROSAURA.—The capital?

CLOTALDO.— Ay, the capital; and ev'n
That capital of capitals, the Court:
Where you may plead, and, I may promise, win
Pardon for this, you say unwilling, trespass,
And prosecute what else you have at heart,
With me to help you forward all I can;
Provided all in loyalty to those
To whom by natural allegiance
I first am bound to.

ROSAURA.— As you make, I take
Your offer: with like promise on my side
Of loyalty to you and those you serve,
Under like reservation for regards
Nearer and dearer still.

CLOTALDO.— Enough, enough;
Your hand; a bargain on both sides. Meanwhile,
Here shall you rest to-night. The break of day
Shall see us both together on the way.

ROSAURA.—Thus then what I for misadventure blamed,
Directly draws me where my wishes aim'd.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Palace at Warsaw. Enter on one side Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy, with his train; and, on the other, the Princess Estrella, with hers.*

ASTOLFO.—My royal cousin, if so near in blood,
Till this auspicious meeting scarcely known,
Till all that beauty promised in the bud
Is now to its consummate blossom blown,
Well met at last; and may—
ESTRELLA.— Enough, my Lord,
Of compliment devised for you by some
Court tailor, and, believe me, still too short
To cover the designful heart below.
ASTOLFO.—Nay, but indeed, fair cousin—
ESTRELLA.— Ay, let Deed
Measure your words, indeed your flowers of speech
Ill with your iron equipage atone;
Irony indeed, and wordy compliment.
ASTOLFO.—Indeed, indeed, you wrong me, royal cousin,
And fair as royal, misinterpreting
What, even for the end you think I aim at,
If false to you, were fatal to myself.
ESTRELLA.—Why, what else means the glittering steel, my Lord
That bristles in the rear of these fine words?
What can it mean, but, failing to cajole,
To fight or force me from my just pretension?
ASTOLFO.—Nay, might I not ask ev'n the same of you,
The nodding helmets of whose men at arms
Out-crest the plumage of your lady court?
ESTRELLA.—But to defend what yours would force from me.
ASTOLFO.—Might not I, lady, say the same of mine?
But not to come to battle, ev'n of words,
With a fair lady, and my kinswoman;
And as averse to stand before your face,
Defenceless, and condemn'd in your disgrace,
Till the good king be here to clear it all—
Will you vouchsafe to hear me?
ESTRELLA.— As you will.
ASTOLFO.—You know that, when about to leave this world,
Our royal grandsire, King Alfonso, left

Three children; one a son, Basilio,
Who wears—long may he wear!—the crown of Poland;
And daughters twain: of whom the elder was
Your mother, Clorileña, now some while
Exalted to a more than mortal throne;
And Recisunda, mine, the younger sister,
Who, married to the Prince of Muscovy,
Gave me the light which may she live to see
Herself for many, many years to come.
Meanwhile, good King Basilio, as you know,
Deep in abstruser studies than this world,
And busier with the stars than lady's eyes,
Has never by a second marriage yet
Replaced, as Poland ask'd of him, the heir
An early marriage brought and took away;
His young queen dying with the son she bore him:
And in such alienation grow so old
As leaves no other hope of heir to Poland
Than his two sisters' children; you, fair cousin,
And me; for whom the Commons of the realm
Divide themselves into two several factions;
Whether for you, the elder sister's child;
Or me, born of the younger, but, they say,
My natural prerogative of man
Outweighing your priority of birth.
Which discord growing loud and dangerous,
Our uncle, King Basilio, doubly sage
In prophesying and providing for
The future, as to deal with it when come,
Bids us here meet to-day in solemn council
Our several pretensions to compose.
And, but the martial outburst that proclaims
His coming, makes all further parley vain,
Unless my bosom, by which only wise
I prophesy, now wrongly prophesies,
By such a happy compact as I dare
But glance at till the Royal Sage declare.

Enter King Basilio with his Council.

ALL.—The King! God save the King!

ESTRELLA [*kneeling*].— Oh, Royal Sir!—
ASTOLFO [*kneeling*].—God save your Majesty!—
KING.— Rise, both of you,
Rise to my arms, Astolfo and Estrella;
As my two sisters' children always mine,
Now more than ever, since myself and Poland
Solely to you for our succession look'd.
And now give ear, you and your several factions,
And you, the Peers and Princes of this realm,
While I reveal the purport of this meeting
In words whose necessary length I trust
No unsuccessful issue shall excuse.
You and the world who have surnamed me "Sage"
Know that I owe that title, if my due,
To my long meditation on the book
Which ever lying open overhead—
The book of heav'n, I mean—so few have read;
Whose golden letters on whose sapphire leaf,
Distinguishing the page of day and night,
And all the revolution of the year;
So with the turning volume where they lie
Still changing their prophetic syllables,
They register the destinies of men:
Until with eyes that, dim with years indeed,
Are quicker to pursue the stars that rule them,
I get the start of Time, and from his hand
The wand of tardy revelation draw.
Oh, had the self-same heav'n upon his page
Inscribed my death ere I should read my life
And, by forecasting of my own mischance,
Play not the victim but the suicide
In my own tragedy!—But you shall hear.
You know how once, as kings must for their people,
And only once, as wise men for themselves,
I woo'd and wedded: know too that my Queen
In childing died; but not, as you believe,
With her, the son she died in giving life to.
For, as the hour of birth was on the stroke,
Her brain conceiving with her womb, she dream'd
A serpent tore her entrail. And, too surely

(For evil omen seldom speaks in vain)
The man-child breaking from that living tomb
That makes our birth the antitype of death,
Man-grateful, for the life she gave him paid
By killing her: and with such circumstance
As suited such unnatural tragedy;
He coming into light, if light it were
That darken'd at his very horoscope,
When heaven's two champions—sun and moon I mean—
Suffused in blood upon each other fell
In such a raging duel of eclipse
As hath not terrified the universe
Since that which wept in blood the death of Christ:
When the dead walk'd, the waters turn'd to blood,
Earth and her cities totter'd, and the world
Seem'd shaken to its last paralysis.
In such a paroxysm of dissolution
That son of mine was born; by that first act
Heading the monstrous catalogue of crime,
I found fore-written in his horoscope;
As great a monster in man's history
As was in nature his nativity;
So savage, bloody, terrible, and impious,
Who, should he live, would tear his country's entrails,
As by his birth his mother's; with which crime
Beginning, he should clench the dreadful tale
By trampling on his father's silver head.
All which fore-reading, and his act of birth
Fate's warrant that I read his life aright;
To save his country from his mother's fate,
I gave abroad that he had died with her
His being slew: with midnight secrecy
I had him carried to a lonely tower
Hewn from the mountain-barriers of the realm,
And under strict anathema of death
Guarded from men's inquisitive approach,
Save from the trusty few one needs must trust;
Who while his fasten'd body they provide
With salutary garb and nourishment,
Instruct his soul in what no soul may miss

Of holy faith, and in such other lore
As may solace his life-imprisonment,
And tame perhaps the Savage prophesied
Toward such a trial as I aim at now,
And now demand your special hearing to.
What in this fearful business I have done,
Judge whether lightly or maliciously—
I, with my own and only flesh and blood,
And proper lineal inheritor!
I swear, had his foretold atrocities
Touch'd me alone, I had not saved myself
At such a cost to him; but as a king—
A Christian king—I say, advisedly,
Who would devote his people to a tyrant
Worse than Caligula fore-chronicled?
But even this not without grave misgiving,
Lest by some chance misreading of the stars,
Or misdirection of what rightly read,
I wrong my son of his prerogative,
And Poland of her rightful sovereign.
For, sure and certain prophets as the stars,
Although they err not, he who reads them may;
Or rightly reading—seeing there is One
Who governs them, as, under Him, they us,
We are not sure if the rough diagram
They draw in heav'n and we interpret here,
Be sure of operation, if the Will
Supreme, that sometimes for some special end
The course of providential nature breaks
By miracle, may not of these same stars
Cancel his own first draft, or overrule
What else fore-written all else overrules.
As, for example, should the Will Almighty
Permit the Free-will of particular man
To break the meshes of else strangling fate—
Which Free-will, fearful of foretold abuse,
I have myself from my own son forclosed
From ever possible self-extrication;
A terrible responsibility,
Not to the conscience to be reconciled

Unless opposing almost certain evil
Against so slight contingency of good.
Well—thus perplex'd, I have resolved at last
To bring the thing to trial: whereunto
Here have I summon'd you, my Peers, and you
Whom I more dearly look to, failing him,
As witnesses to that which I propose;
And thus propose the doing it. Clotaldo,
Who guards my son with old fidelity,
Shall bring him hither from his tower by night,
Lockt in a sleep so fast as by my art
I rivet to within a link of death,
But yet from death so far, that next day's dawn
Shall wake him up upon the royal bed,
Complete in consciousness and faculty,
When with all princely pomp and retinue
My loyal Peers with due obeisance
Shall hail him Segismund, the Prince of Poland.
Then if with any show of human kindness
He fling discredit, not upon the stars,
But upon me, their misinterpreter;
With all apology mistaken age
Can make to youth it never meant to harm,
To my son's forehead will I shift the crown
I long have wish'd upon a younger brow;
And in religious humiliation,
For what of worn-out age remains to me,
Entreat my pardon both of Heav'n and him
For tempting destinies beyond my reach.
But if, as I misdoubt, at his first step
The hoof of the predicted savage shows;
Before predicted mischief can be done,
The self-same sleep that loosed him from the chain
Shall reconsign him, not to loose again.
Then shall I, having lost that heir direct,
Look solely to my sisters' children twain;
Each of a claim so equal as divides
The voice of Poland to their several sides,
But, as I trust, to be entwined ere long
Into one single wreath so fair and strong

As shall at once all difference atone,
And cease the realm's division with their own.
Cousins and Princes, Peers and Councillors,
Such is the purport of this invitation,
And such is my design. Whose furtherance
If not as Sovereign, if not as Seer,
Yet one whom these white locks, if nothing else,
To patient acquiescence consecrate,
I now demand and even supplicate.

ASTOLFO.—Such news, and from such lips, may well suspend
The tongue to loyal answer most attuned;
But if to me as spokesman of my faction
Your Highness looks for answer; I reply
For one and all—Let Segismund, whom now
We first hear tell of as your living heir,
Appear, and but in your sufficient eye
Approve himself worthy to be your son,
Then we will hail him Poland's rightful heir.
What says my cousin?

ESTRELLA.— Ay, with all my heart.
But if my youth and sex upbraid me not
That I should dare ask of so wise a king—

KING.—Ask, ask, fair cousin! Nothing, I am sure,
Not well consider'd; nay, if 'twere, yet nothing
But pardonable from such lips as those.

ESTRELLA.—Then, with your pardon, Sir—If Segismund,
My cousin, whom I shall rejoice to hail
As Prince of Poland too, as you propose,
Be to a trial coming upon which
More, as I think, than life itself depends,
Why, Sir, with sleep-disorder'd senses brought
To this uncertain contest with his stars?

KING.—Well ask'd indeed! As wisely be it answer'd!—
Because it is uncertain, see you not?
For as I think I can discern between
The sudden flaws of a sleep-startled man,
And of the savage thing we have to dread;
If but bewilder'd, dazzled, and uncouth,
As might the sanest and the civilest
In circumstance so strange—nay, more than that,

If moved to any outbreak short of blood,
All shall be well with him; and how much more,
If 'mid the magic turmoil of the change,
He shall so calm a resolution show
As scarce to reel beneath so great a blow!
But if with savage passion uncontroll'd
He lay about him like the brute foretold,
And must as suddenly be caged again;
Then what redoubled anguish and despair,
From that brief flash of blissful liberty
Remitted—and forever—to his chain!
Which so much less, if on the stage of glory
Enter'd and exited through such a door
Of sleep as makes a dream of all between.

ESTRELLA.—Oh kindly answer, Sir, to question that
To charitable courtesy less wise
Might call for pardon rather! I shall now
Gladly, what, uninstructed, loyally
I should have waited.

ASTOLFO.— Your Highness doubts not me,
Nor how my heart follows my cousin's lips,
Whatever way the doubtful balance fall,
Still loyal to your bidding.

OMNES.— So say all.

KING.—I hoped, and did expect, of all no less—
And sure no sovereign ever needed more
From all who owe him love or loyalty.
For what a strait of time I stand upon,
When to this issue not alone I bring
My son your Prince, but ev'n myself your King:
And, whichsoever way for him it turn,
Of less than little honor to myself.
For if this coming trial justify
My thus withholding from my son his right,
Is not the judge himself justified in
The father's shame? And if the judge proved wrong,
My son withholding from his right thus long,
Shame and remorse to judge and father both:
Unless remorse and shame together drown'd
In having what I flung for worthless found.

But come—already weary with your travel,
And ill refresh'd by this strange history,
Until the hours that draw the sun from heav'n
Unite us at the customary board,
Each to his several chamber: you to rest;
I to contrive with old Clotaldo best
The method of a stranger thing than old
Time has as yet among his records told. [*Exeunt.*

ACT SECOND

SCENE I.—*A Throne-room in the Palace. Music within. Enter King and Clotaldo, meeting a Lord in waiting.*

KING.—You, for a moment beckon'd from your office,
Tell me thus far how goes it. In due time
The potion left him?
LORD.— At the very hour
To which your Highness temper'd it. Yet not
So wholly but some lingering mist still hung
About his dawning senses—which to clear,
We fill'd and handed him a morning drink
With sleep's specific antidote suffused;
And while with princely raiment we invested
What nature surely modell'd for a Prince—
All but the sword—as you directed—
KING. Ay—
LORD.—If not too loudly, yet emphatically
Still with the title of a Prince address'd him.
KING.—How bore he that?
LORD.— With all the rest, my liege,
I will not say so like one in a dream
As one himself misdoubting that he dream'd.
KING.—So far so well, Clotaldo, either way,
And best of all if tow'rds the worse I dread.
But yet no violence?—
LORD.— At most, impatience;
Wearied perhaps with importunities
We yet were bound to offer.

KING.— Oh, Clotaldo!
Though thus far well, yet would myself had drunk
The potion he revives from! such suspense
Crowds all the pulses of life's residue
Into the present moment; and, I think,
Whichever way the trembling scale may turn,
Will leave the crown of Poland for some one
To wait no longer than the setting sun!
CLOTALDO.—Courage, my liege! The curtain is undrawn,
And each must play his part out manfully,
Leaving the rest to heav'n.
KING.— Whose written words
If I should misinterpret or transgress!
But as you say—
[*To the Lord, who exits*] You, back to him at once;
Clotaldo, you, when he is somewhat used
To the new world of which they call him Prince,
Where place and face, and all, is strange to him,
With your known features and familiar garb
Shall then, as chorus to the scene, accost him,
And by such earnest of that old and too
Familiar world, assure him of the new.
Last in the strange procession, I myself
Will by one full and last development
Complete the plot for that catastrophe
That he must put to all; God grant it be
The crown of Poland on his brows!—Hark! hark!—
Was that his voice within?—Now louder—Oh,
Clotaldo, what! so soon begun to roar!—
Again! above the music—But betide
What may, until the moment, we must hide.
[*Exeunt King and Clotaldo.*
SEGISMUND [*within*].—Forbear! I stifle with your perfume!
cease
Your crazy salutations! peace, I say—
Begone, or let me go, ere I go mad
With all this babble, mummery, and glare,
For I am growing dangerous—Air! room! air!—
[*He rushes in. Music ceases.*
Oh but to save the reeling brain from wreck

With its bewilder'd senses!—
[*He covers his eyes for awhile.*
What! Ev'n now
That Babel left behind me, but my eyes
Pursued by the same glamour, that—unless
Alike bewitch'd too—the confederate sense
Vouches for palpable: bright-shining floors
That ring hard answer back to the stamp'd heel,
And shoot up airy columns marble-cold,
That, as they climb, break into golden leaf
And capital, till they embrace aloft
In clustering flower and fruitage over walls
Hung with such purple curtain as the West
Fringes with such a gold; or over-laid
With sanguine-glowing semblances of men,
Each in his all but living action busied,
Or from the wall they look from, with fix'd eyes
Pursuing me; and one most strange of all
That, as I pass'd the crystal on the wall,
Look'd from it—left it—and as I return,
Returns, and looks me face to face again—
Unless some false reflection of my brain,
The outward semblance of myself—Myself?
How know that tawdry shadow for myself,
But that it moves as I move; lifts his hand
With mine; each motion echoing so close
The immediate suggestion of the will
In which myself I recognize—Myself!—
What, this fantastic Segismund the same
Who last night, as for all his nights before,
Lay down to sleep in wolf-skin on the ground
In a black turret which the wolf howl'd round,
And woke again upon a golden bed,
Round which as clouds about a rising sun,
In scarce less glittering caparison,
Gather'd gay shapes that, underneath a breeze
Of music, handed him upon their knees
The wine of heaven in a cup of gold,
And still in soft melodious under-song
Hailing me Prince of Poland!—" Segismund,"

They said, "Our Prince! The Prince of Poland!" and
Again, "Oh, welcome, welcome, to his own,
"Our own Prince Segismund—"
Oh, but a blast—
One blast of the rough mountain air! one look
At the grim features—[*He goes to the window*
What they disvizor'd also! shatter'd chaos
Cast into stately shape and masonry,
Between whose channell'd and perspective sides
Compact with rooted towers, and flourishing
To heav'n with gilded pinnacle and spire,
Flows the live current ever to and fro
With open aspect and free step!——Clotaldo!
Clotaldo!—calling as one scarce dares call
For him who suddenly might break the spell
One fears to walk without him—Why, that I,
With unencumber'd step as any there,
Go stumbling through my glory—feeling for
That iron leading-string—ay, for myself—
For that fast-anchor'd self of yesterday,
Of yesterday, and all my life before,
Ere drifted clean from self-identity
Upon the fluctuation of to-day's
Mad whirling circumstance!—And, fool, why not?
If reason, sense, and self-identity
Obliterated from a worn-out brain,
Art thou not maddest striving to be sane,
And catching at that Self of yesterday
That, like a leper's rags, best flung away!
Or if not mad, then dreaming—dreaming?—well—
Dreaming then—Or, if self to self be true,
Not mock'd by that, but as poor souls have been
By those who wrong'd them, to give wrong new relish?
Or have those stars indeed they told me of
As masters of my wretched life of old,
Into some happier constellation roll'd,
And brought my better fortune out on earth
Clear as themselves in heav'n!—Prince Segismund
They call'd me—and at will I shook them off—
Will they return again at my command

Again to call me so?—Within there! You!
Segismund calls—Prince Segismund—
[*He has seated himself on the throne.*

Enter Chamberlain, with Lords in waiting.

CHAMBERLAIN.— I rejoice
That unadvised of any but the voice
Of royal instinct in the blood, your Highness
Has ta'en the chair that you were born to fill.
SEGISMUND.—The chair?
CHAMBERLAIN.— The royal throne of Poland, Sir,
Which may your Royal Highness keep as long
As he that now rules from it shall have ruled
When heav'n has call'd him to itself.
SEGISMUND.— When he?—
CHAMBERLAIN.—Your royal father, King Basilio, Sir.
SEGISMUND.—My royal father—King Basilio.
You see I answer but as Echo does,
Not knowing what she listens or repeats.
This is my throne—this is my palace—Oh,
But this out of the window?—
CHAMBERLAIN.— Warsaw, Sir,
Your capital—
SEGISMUND.— And all the moving people?
CHAMBERLAIN.—Your subjects and your vassals like ourselves.
SEGISMUND.—Ay, ay—my subjects—in my capital—
Warsaw—and I am Prince of it—You see
It needs much iteration to strike sense
Into the human echo.
CHAMBERLAIN.— Left awhile
In the quick brain, the word will quickly to
Full meaning blow.
SEGISMUND.— You think so?
CHAMBERLAIN.— And meanwhile
Lest our obsequiousness, which means no worse
Than customary honor to the Prince
We most rejoice to welcome, trouble you,
Should we retire again? or stand apart?
Or would your Highness have the music play

Again, which meditation, as they say,
So often loves to float upon?
SEGISMUND.— The music?
No—yes—perhaps the trumpet—[*Aside.*] Yet if that
Brought back the troop!
A LORD.— The trumpet! There again
How trumpet-like spoke out the blood of Poland!
CHAMBERLAIN.—Before the morning is far up, your Highness
Will have the trumpet marshalling your soldiers
Under the Palace windows.
SEGISMUND.— Ah, my soldiers—
My soldiers—not black-vizor'd?—
CHAMBERLAIN.— Sir?
SEGISMUND.— No matter.
But—one thing—for a moment—in your ear—
Do you know one Clotaldo?
CHAMBERLAIN.— Oh, my Lord,
He and myself together, I may say,
Although in different vocations,
Have silver'd in your royal father's service;
And, as I trust, with both of us a few
White hairs to fall in yours.
SEGISMUND.— Well said, well said!.
Basilio, my father—well—Clotaldo—
Is he my kinsman too?
CHAMBERLAIN.— Oh, my good Lord,
A General simply in your Highness' service,
Than whom your Highness has no trustier.
SEGISMUND.—Ay, so you said before, I think. And you
With that white wand of yours—
Why, now I think on't, I have read of such
A silver-hair'd magician with a wand,
Who in a moment, with a wave of it,
Turn'd rags to jewels, clowns to emperors,
By some benigner magic than the stars
Spirited poor good people out of hand
From all their woes; in some enchanted sleep
Carried them off on cloud or dragon-back
Over the mountains, over the wide deep,
And set them down to wake in fairyland.

CHAMBERLAIN.—Oh, my good Lord, you laugh at me—and I
Right glad to make you laugh at such a price:
You know me no enchanter: if I were,
I and my wand as much as your Highness',
As now your chamberlain—
SEGISMUND.— My chamberlain?—
And these that follow you?—
CHAMBERLAIN.— On you, my Lord;
Your Highness' lords in waiting.
SEGISMUND.— Lords in waiting.
Well, I have now learn'd to repeat, I think,
If only but by rote—This is my palace,
And this my throne—which unadvised—And that
Out of the window there my Capital;
And all the people moving up and down
My subjects and my vassals like yourselves,
My chamberlain—and lords in waiting—and
Clotaldo—and Clotaldo?—
You are an aged, and seem a reverend man—
You do not—though his fellow-officer—
You do not mean to mock me?
CHAMBERLAIN.— Oh, my Lord!
SEGISMUND.—Well then—If no magician, as you say,
Yet setting me a riddle, that my brain,
With all its senses whirling, cannot solve,
Yourself or one of these with you must answer—
How I—that only last night fell asleep
Not knowing that the very soil of earth
I lay down—chain'd—to sleep upon was Poland—
Awake to find myself the Lord of it,
With Lords, and Generals, and Chamberlains,
And ev'n my very Gaoler, for my vassals!

Enter Clotaldo suddenly.

CLOTALDO.—Stand all aside
That I may put into his hand the clew
To lead him out of this amazement. Sir,
Vouchsafe your Highness from my bended knee
Receive my homage first.

SEGISMUND.— Clotaldo! What,
At last—his old self—undisguised where all
Is masquerade—to end it!—You kneeling too!
What! have the stars you told me long ago
Laid that old work upon you, added this,
That, having chain'd your prisoner so long,
You loose his body now to slay his wits,
Dragging him—how I know not—whither scarce
I understand—dressing him up in all
This frippery, with your dumb familiars
Disvizor'd, and their lips unlockt to lie,
Calling him Prince and King, and, madman-like,
Setting a crown of straw upon his head?
CLOTALDO.—Would but your Highness, as indeed I now
Must call you—and upon his bended knee
Never bent Subject more devotedly—
However all about you, and perhaps
You to yourself incomprehensible,
But rest in the assurance of your own
Sane waking senses, by these witnesses
Attested, till the story of it all,
Of which I bring a chapter, be reveal'd,
Assured of all you see and hear as neither
Madness nor mockery—
SEGISMUND.— What then?
CLOTALDO.— All it seems:
This palace with its royal garniture;
This capital of which it is the eye,
With all its temples, marts, and arsenals;
This realm of which this city is the head,
With all its cities, villages, and tilth,
Its armies, fleets, and commerce; all your own;
And all the living souls that make them up,
From those who now, and those who shall, salute you,
Down to the poorest peasant of the realm,
Your subjects—Who, though now their mighty voice
Sleeps in the general body unapprised,
Wait but a word from those about you now
To hail you Prince of Poland, Segismund.
SEGISMUND.—All this is so?

CLOTALDO.— As sure as anything
Is, or can be.
SEGISMUND.— You swear it on the faith
You taught me—elsewhere?—
CLOTALDO [*kissing the hilt of his sword*].—Swear it upon this
Symbol, and champion of the holy faith
I wear it to defend.
SEGISMUND [*to himself*].—My eyes have not deceived me, nor my ears,
With this transfiguration, nor the strain
Of royal welcome that arose and blew,
Breathed from no lying lips, along with it.
For here Clotaldo comes, his own old self,
Who, if not Lie and phantom with the rest—
[*Aloud*] Well then, all this is thus.
For have not these fine people told me so,
And you, Clotaldo, sworn it? And the Why
And Wherefore are to follow by and by!
And yet—and yet—why wait for that which you
Who take your oath on it can answer—and
Indeed it presses hard upon my brain—
What I was asking of these gentlemen
When you came in upon us; how it is
That I—the Segismund you know so long—
No longer than the sun that rose to-day
Rose—and from what you know—
Rose to be Prince of Poland?
CLOTALDO.— So to be
Acknowledged and entreated, sir.
SEGISMUND.— So be
Acknowledged and entreated—
Well—But if now by all, by some at least
So known—if not entreated—heretofore—
Though not by you—For, now I think again,
Of what should be your attestation worth,
You that of all my questionable subjects
Who knowing what, yet left me where, I was,
You least of all, Clotaldo, till the dawn
Of this first day that told it to myself?
CLOTALDO.—Oh, let your Highness draw the line across

Fore-written sorrow, and in this new dawn
Bury that long sad night.
SEGISMUND.— Not ev'n the Dead,
Call'd to the resurrection of the blest,
Shall so directly drop all memory
Of woes and wrongs foregone!
CLOTALDO.— But not resent—
Purged by the trial of that sorrow past
For full fruition of their present bliss.
SEGISMUND.—But leaving with the Judge what, till this earth
Be cancell'd in the burning heav'ns, He leaves
His earthly delegates to execute,
Of retribution in reward to them
And woe to those who wrong'd them—Not as you,
Not you, Clotaldo, knowing not—And yet
Ev'n to the guiltiest wretch in all the realm,
Of any treason guilty short of that,
Stern usage—but assuredly not knowing,
Not knowing 'twas your sovereign lord, Clotaldo,
You used so sternly.
CLOTALDO.— Ay, sir; with the same
Devotion and fidelity that now
Does homage to him for my sovereign.
SEGISMUND.—Fidelity that held his Prince in chains!
CLOTALDO.—Fidelity more fast than had it loosed him—
SEGISMUND.—Ev'n from the very dawn of consciousness
Down at the bottom of the barren rocks,
Where scarce a ray of sunshine found him out,
In which the poorest beggar of my realm
At least to human-full proportion grows—
Me! Me—whose station was the kingdom's top
To flourish in, reaching my head to heav'n,
And with my branches overshadowing
The meaner growth below!
CLOTALDO.— Still with the same
Fidelity—
SEGISMUND.— To me!—
CLOTALDO.— Ay, sir, to you,
Through that divine allegiance upon which
All Order and Authority is based;
Which to revolt against—

SEGISMUND.— Were to revolt
Against the stars, belike!
CLOTALDO.— And him who reads them;
And by that right, and by the sovereignty
He wears as you shall wear it after him;
Ay, one to whom yourself—
Yourself, ev'n more than any subject here,
Are bound by yet another and more strong
Allegiance—King Basilio—your Father—
SEGISMUND.—Basilio—King—my father!—
CLOTALDO.— Oh, my Lord,
Let me beseech you on my bended knee,
For your own sake—for Poland's—and for his,
Who, looking up for counsel to the skies,
Did what he did under authority
To which the kings of earth themselves are subject,
And whose behest not only he that suffers,
But he that executes, not comprehends,
But only He that orders it—
SEGISMUND.— The King—
My father!—Either I am mad already,
Or that way driving fast—or I should know
That fathers do not use their children so,
Or men were loosed from all allegiance
To fathers, kings, and heav'n that order'd all.
But, mad or not, my hour is come, and I
Will have my reckoning—Either you lie,
Under the skirt of sinless majesty
Shrouding your treason; or if that indeed,
Guilty itself, take refuge in the stars
That cannot hear the charge, or disavow—
You, whether doer or deviser, who
Come first to hand, shall pay the penalty
By the same hand you owe it to—
[*Seizing Clotaldo's sword and about to strike him.*

Enter Rosaura suddenly.

ROSAURA.—Fie, my lord—forbear,
What! a young hand raised against silver hair!—
[*She retreats through the crowd.*

SEGISMUND.—Stay! stay!—What come and vanish'd as before—
I scarce remember how—but—
VOICES [*within*].—Room for Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy!

Enter Astolfo.

ASTOLFO.—Welcome, thrice welcome, the auspicious day,
When from the mountain where he darkling lay,
The Polish sun into the firmament
Sprung all the brighter for his late ascent,
And in meridian glory—
SEGISMUND.— Where is he?
Why must I ask this twice?—
A LORD.— The Page, my Lord?
I wonder at his boldness—
SEGISMUND.— But I tell you
He came with Angel written in his face
As now it is, when all was black as hell
About, and none of you who now—he came,
And Angel-like flung me a shining sword
To cut my way through darkness; and again
Angel-like wrests it from me in behalf
Of one—whom I will spare for sparing him:
But he must come and plead with that same voice
That pray'd for me—in vain.
CHAMBERLAIN.— He is gone for,
And shall attend your pleasure, sir. Meanwhile,
Will not your Highness, as in courtesy,
Return your royal cousin's greeting?
SEGISMUND.— Whose?
CHAMBERLAIN.—Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy, my Lord,
Saluted, and with gallant compliment
Welcomed you to your royal title.
SEGISMUND [*to Astolfo*].— Oh—
You knew of this then?
ASTOLFO.— Knew of what, my Lord?
SEGISMUND.—That I was Prince of Poland all the while,
And you my subject?
ASTOLFO.— Pardon me, my Lord;
But some few hours ago myself I learn'd

Your dignity; but, knowing it, no more
Than when I knew it not, your subject.

SEGISMUND.— What then?

ASTOLFO.—Your Highness' chamberlain ev'n now has told you;
Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy,
Your father's sister's son; your cousin, sir:
And who as such, and in his own right Prince,
Expects from you the courtesy he shows.

CHAMBERLAIN.—His Highness is as yet unused to Court,
And to the ceremonious interchange
Of compliment, especially to those
Who draw their blood from the same royal fountain.

SEGISMUND.—Where is the lad? I weary of all this—
Prince, cousins, chamberlains, and compliments—
Where are my soldiers? Blow the trumpet, and
With one sharp blast scatter these butterflies,
And bring the men of iron to my side,
With whom a king feels like a king indeed!

VOICES [*within*].—Within there! room for the Princess Estrella!

Enter Estrella with Ladies.

ESTRELLA.—Welcome, my Lord, right welcome to the throne
That much too long has waited for your coming:
And, in the general voice of Poland, hear
A kinswoman and cousin's no less sincere.

SEGISMUND.—Ay, this is welcome welcome-worth indeed,
And cousin cousin-worth! Oh, I have thus
Over the threshold of the mountain seen,
Leading a bevy of fair stars, the moon
Enter the court of heav'n—My kinswoman!
My cousin! But my subject?—

ESTRELLA.— If you please
To count your cousin for your subject, sir,
You shall not find her a disloyal.

SEGISMUND.— Oh,
But there are twin stars in that heav'nly face,
That now I know for having over-ruled
Those evil ones that darken'd all my past,
And brought me forth from that captivity
To be the slave of her who set me free.

ESTRELLA.—Indeed, my Lord, these eyes have no such power
Over the past or present: but perhaps
They brighten at your welcome to supply
The little that a lady's speech commends;
And in the hope that, let whichever be
The other's subject, we may both be friends.
SEGISMUND.—Your hand to that—But why does this warm hand
Shoot a cold shudder through me?
ESTRELLA.— In revenge
For likening me to that cold moon, perhaps.
SEGISMUND.—Oh, but the lip whose music tells me so
Breathes of a warmer planet, and that lip
Shall remedy the treason of the hand!
[*He catches to embrace her.*
ESTRELLA.—Release me, sir!
CHAMBERLAIN.— And pardon me, my Lord,
This lady is a Princess absolute,
As Prince he is who just saluted you,
And claims her by affiance.
SEGISMUND.— Hence, old fool,
Forever thrusting that white stick of yours
Between me and my pleasure!
ASTOLFO.— This cause is mine.
Forbear, sir—
SEGISMUND.— What, sir mouth-piece, you again?
ASTOLFO.—My Lord, I waive your insult to myself
In recognition of the dignity
You yet are new to, and that greater still
You look in time to wear. But for this lady—
Whom, if my cousin now, I hope to claim
Henceforth by yet a nearer, dearer name—
SEGISMUND.—And what care I? She is my cousin too:
And if you be a Prince—well, am not I?
Lord of the very soil you stand upon?
By that, and by that right beside of blood
That like a fiery fountain hitherto
Pent in the rock leaps toward her at her touch,
Mine, before all the cousins in Muscovy!
You call me Prince of Poland, and yourselves

My subjects—traitors therefore to this hour,
Who let me perish all my youth away
Chain'd there among the mountains; till, forsooth,
Terrified at your treachery foregone,
You spirit me up here, I know not how,
Popinjay-like invest me like yourselves,
Choke me with scent and music that I loathe,
And, worse than all the music and the scent,
With false, long-winged, fulsome compliment,
That "Oh, you are my subjects!" and in word
Reiterating still obedience,
Thwart me in deed at every step I take:
When just about to wreak a just revenge
Upon that old arch-traitor of you all,
Filch from my vengeance him I hate; and him
I loved—the first and only face—till this—
I cared to look on in your ugly court—
And now when palpably I grasp at last
What hitherto but shadow'd in my dreams—
Affiances and interferences,
The first who dares to meddle with me more—
Princes and chamberlains and counsellors,
Touch her who dares!—

ASTOLFO.— That dare I—
SEGISMUND [*seizing him by the throat*].—You dare!
CHAMBERLAIN.—My Lord!—
A LORD.— His strength 's a lion's—
VOICES [*within*].— The King! The King!—

Enter King.

A LORD.—And on a sudden how he stands at gaze,
As might a wolf just fasten'd on his prey,
Glaring at a suddenly encounter'd lion.
KING.—And I that hither flew with open arms
To fold them round my son, must now return
To press them to an empty heart again!
[*He sits on the throne.*
SEGISMUND.—That is the King?—My father?—
[*After a long pause*] I have heard
That sometimes some blind instinct has been known

To draw to mutual recognition those
Of the same blood, beyond all memory
Divided, or ev'n never met before.
I know not how this is—perhaps in brutes
That live by kindlier instincts—but I know
That looking now upon that head whose crown
Pronounces him a sovereign king, I feel
No setting of the current in my blood
Tow'rd him as sire. How is 't with you, old man,
Tow'rd him they call your son?—

KING.— Alas! Alas!

SEGISMUND.—Your sorrow, then?

KING.— Beholding what I do.

SEGISMUND.—Ay, but how know this sorrow, that has grown
And moulded to this present shape of man,
As of your own creation?

KING.— Ev'n from birth.

SEGISMUND.—But from that hour to this, near, as I think,
Some twenty such renewals of the year
As trace themselves upon the barren rocks,
I never saw you, nor you me—unless,
Unless, indeed, through one of those dark masks
Through which a son might fail to recognize
The best of fathers?

KING.— Be that as you will:
But, now we see each other face to face,
Know me as you I know; which did I not,
By whatsoever signs, assuredly
You were not here to prove it at my risk.

SEGISMUND.—You are my father.
And is it true then, as Clotaldo swears,
'Twas you that from the dawning birth of one
Yourself brought into being—you, I say,
Who stole his very birthright; not alone
That secondary and peculiar right
Of sovereignty, but even that prime
Inheritance that all men share alike,
And chain'd him—chain'd him!—like a wild beast's whelp,
Among as savage mountains, to this hour?
Answer if this be thus.

KING.— Oh, Segismund,
In all that I have done that seems to you,
And, without further hearing, fairly seems,
Unnatural and cruel—'twas not I,
But One who writes His order in the sky
I dared not misinterpret nor neglect,
Who knows with what reluctance—
SEGISMUND.— Oh, those stars,
Those stars, that too far up from human blame
To clear themselves, or careless of the charge,
Still bear upon their shining shoulders all
The guilt men shift upon them!
KING.— Nay, but think:
Not only on the common score of kind,
But that peculiar count of sovereignty—
If not behind the beast in brain as heart,
How should I thus deal with my innocent child,
Doubly desired, and doubly dear when come,
As that sweet second-self that all desire,
And princes more than all, to root themselves
By that succession in their people's hearts?
Unless at that superior Will, to which
Not kings alone, but sovereign nature bows.
SEGISMUND.—And what had those same stars to tell of me
That should compel a father and a king
So much against that double instinct?
KING.— That,
Which I have brought you hither, at my peril,
Against their written warning, to disprove,
By justice, mercy, human kindliness.
SEGISMUND.—And therefore made yourself their instrument
To make your son the savage and the brute
They only prophesied?—Are you not afear'd,
Lest, irrespective as such creatures are
Of such relationship, the brute you made
Revenge the man you marr'd—like sire, like son,
To do by you as you by me have done?
KING.—You never had a savage heart from me;
I may appeal to Poland.
SEGISMUND.— Then from whom?

If pure in fountain, poison'd by yourself
When scarce begun to flow. To make a man
Not, as I see, degraded from the mould
I came from, nor compared to those about,
And then to throw your own flesh to the dogs!—
Why not at once, I say, if terrified
At the prophetic omens of my birth,
Have drown'd or stifled me, as they do whelps
Too costly or too dangerous to keep?

KING.—That, living, you might learn to live, and rule
Yourself and Poland.

SEGISMUND.— By the means you took
To spoil for either?

KING.— Nay, but, Segismund!
You know not—cannot know—happily wanting
The sad experience on which knowledge grows,
How the too early consciousness of power
Spoils the best blood; nor whether for your long-
Constrain'd disheritance (which, but for me,
Remember, and for my relenting love
Bursting the bond of fate, had been eternal)
You have not now a full indemnity;
Wearing the blossom of your youth unspent
In the voluptuous sunshine of a court,
That often, by too early blossoming,
Too soon deflowers the rose of royalty.

SEGISMUND.—Ay, but what some precocious warmth may spill,
May not an early frost as surely kill?

KING.—But, Segismund, my son, whose quick discourse
Proves I have not extinguish'd and destroy'd
The Man you charge me with extinguishing,
However it condemn me for the fault
Of keeping a good light so long eclipsed,
Reflect! This is the moment upon which
Those stars, whose eyes, although we see them not,
By day as well as night are on us still,
Hang watching up in the meridian heaven
Which way the balance turns; and if to you—
As by your dealing God decide it may,
To my confusion!—let me answer it

Unto yourself alone, who shall at once
Approve yourself to be your father's judge,
And sovereign of Poland in his stead,
By justice, mercy, self-sobriety,
And all the reasonable attributes
Without which, impotent to rule himself,
Others one cannot, and one must not rule;
But which if you but show the blossom of—
All that is past we shall but look upon
As the first out-fling of a generous nature
Rioting in first liberty; and if
This blossom do but promise such a flower
As promises in turn its kindly fruit:
Forthwith upon your brows the royal crown,
That now weighs heavy on my agèd brows,
I will devolve; and while I pass away
Into some cloister, with my Maker there
To make my peace in penitence and prayer,
Happily settle the disorder'd realm
That now cries loudly for a lineal heir.

SEGISMUND.—And so—
When the crown falters on your shaking head,
And slips the sceptre from your palsied hand,
And Poland for her rightful heir cries out;
When not only your stol'n monopoly
Fails you of earthly power, but 'cross the grave
The judgment-trumpet of another world
Calls you to count for your abuse of this;
Then, oh then, terrified by the double danger,
You drag me from my den—
Boast not of giving up at last the power
You can no longer hold, and never rightly
Held, but in fee for him you robb'd it from;
And be assured your Savage, once let loose,
Will not be caged again so quickly; not
By threat or adulation to be tamed,
Till he have had his quarrel out with those
Who made him what he is.

KING.— Beware! Beware!
Subdue the kindled Tiger in your eye,

Nor dream that it was sheer necessity
Made me thus far relax the bond of fate,
And, with far more of terror than of hope
Threaten myself, my people, and the State.
Know that, if old, I yet have vigor left
To wield the sword as well as wear the crown;
And if my more immediate issue fail,
Not wanting scions of collateral blood,
Whose wholesome growth shall more than compensate
For all the loss of a distorted stem.

SEGISMUND.—That will I straightway bring to trial—Oh,
After a revelation such as this,
The Last Day shall have little left to show
Of righted wrong and villainy requited!
Nay, Judgment now beginning upon earth,
Myself, methinks, in right of all my wrongs,
Appointed heav'n's avenging minister,
Accuser, judge, and executioner,
Sword in hand, cite the guilty—First, as worst,
The usurper of his son's inheritance;
Him and his old accomplice, time and crime
Inveterate, and unable to repay
The golden years of life they stole away.
What, does he yet maintain his state, and keep
The throne he should be judged from? Down with him,
That I may trample on the false white head
So long has worn my crown! Where are my soldiers?
Of all my subjects and my vassals here
Not one to do my bidding? Hark! A trumpet!
The trumpet—

[*He pauses as the trumpet sounds, and masked soldiers gradually fill in behind the throne.*

KING [*rising before his throne*].—Ay, indeed, the trumpet blows
A memorable note, to summon those
Who, if forthwith you fall not at the feet
Of him whose head you threaten with the dust,
Forthwith shall draw the curtain of the Past
About you; and this momentary gleam
Of glory, that you think to hold life-fast,
So coming, so shall vanish, as a dream.

SEGISMUND.—He prophesies; the old man prophesies;
And, at his trumpet's summons, from the tower
The leash-bound shadows loosen'd after me
My rising glory reach and over-lour—
But, reach not I my height, he shall not hold,
But with me back to his own darkness!
[*He dashes toward the throne and is enclosed by the soldiers.*
Traitors!
Hold off! Unhand me!—Am not I your king?
And you would strangle him!—
But I am breaking with an inward fire
Shall scorch you off, and wrap me on the wings
Of conflagration from a kindled pyre
Of lying prophecies and prophet-kings
Above the extinguish'd stars—Reach me the sword
He flung me—Fill me such a bowl of wine
As that you woke the day with—
KING.— And shall close—
But of the vintage that Clotaldo knows.

ACT THIRD

SCENE I.—*The Tower, as in Scene I. of Act First. Segismund, as at first, and Clotaldo.*

CLOTALDO.—Princes and princesses, and counsellors,
Fluster'd to right and left—my life made at—
But that was nothing—
Even the white-hair'd, venerable King
Seized on—Indeed, you made wild work of it;
And so discover'd in your outward action,
Flinging your arms about you in your sleep,
Grinding your teeth—and, as I now remember,
Woke mouthing out judgment and execution,
On those about you.
SEGISMUND.— Ay, I did indeed.
CLOTALDO.—Ev'n now your eyes stare wild; your hair stands up—

Your pulses throb and flutter, reeling still
Under the storm of such a dream—
SEGISMUND.— A dream!
That seem'd as swearable reality
As what I wake in now.
CLOTALDO.— Ay—wondrous how
Imagination in a sleeping brain
Out of the uncontingent senses draws
Sensations strong as from the real touch;
That we not only laugh aloud, and drench
With tears our pillow; but in the agony
Of some imaginary conflict, fight
And struggle—ev'n as you did; some, 'tis thought,
Under the dreamt-of stroke of death have died.
SEGISMUND.—And what so very strange too—In that world
Where place as well as people all was strange,
Ev'n I almost as strange unto myself,
You only, you, Clotaldo—you, as much
And palpably yourself as now you are,
Came in this very garb you ever wore,
By such a token of the past, you said,
To assure me of that seeming present.
CLOTALDO.— Ay?
SEGISMUND.—Ay; and even told me of the very stars
You tell me here of—how in spite of them,
I was enlarged to all that glory.
CLOTALDO.— Ay,
By the false spirits' nice contrivance thus
A little truth oft leavens all the false,
The better to delude us.
SEGISMUND.— For you know
'Tis nothing but a dream?
CLOTALDO.— Nay, you yourself
Know best how lately you awoke from that
You know you went to sleep on?—
Why, have you never dreamt the like before?
SEGISMUND.—Never, to such reality.
CLOTALDO.— Such dreams
Are oftentimes the sleeping exhalations
Of that ambition that lies smouldering

Under the ashes of the lowest fortune;
By which, when reason slumbers, or has lost
The reins of sensible comparison,
We fly at something higher than we are—
Scarce ever dive to lower—to be kings,
Or conquerors, crown'd with laurel or with gold,
Nay, mounting heav'n itself on eagle wings.
Which, by the way, now that I think of it,
May furnish us the key to this high flight—
That royal Eagle we were watching, and
Talking of as you went to sleep last night.

SEGISMUND.—Last night? Last night?

CLOTALDO.— Ay, do you not remember
Envying his immunity of flight,
As, rising from his throne of rock, he sail'd
Above the mountains far into the West,
That burn'd about him, while with poising wings
He darkled in it as a burning brand
Is seen to smoulder in the fire it feeds?

SEGISMUND.—Last night—last night—Oh, what a day was that
Between that last night and this sad To-day!

CLOTALDO.—And yet, perhaps,
Only some few dark moments, into which
Imagination, once lit up within
And unconditional of time and space,
Can pour infinities.

SEGISMUND.— And I remember
How the old man they call'd the King, who wore
The crown of gold about his silver hair,
And a mysterious girdle round his waist,
Just when my rage was roaring at its height,
And after which it all was dark again,
Bid me beware lest all should be a dream.

CLOTALDO.—Ay—there another specialty of dreams,
That once the dreamer 'gins to dream he dreams,
His foot is on the very verge of waking.

SEGISMUND.—Would it had been upon the verge of death
That knows no waking—
Lifting me up to glory, to fall back,
Stunn'd, crippled—wretcheder than ev'n before.

CLOTALDO.—Yet not so glorious, Segismund, if you
Your visionary honor wore so ill
As to work murder and revenge on those
Who meant you well.
SEGISMUND.— Who meant me!—me! their Prince
Chain'd like a felon—
CLOTALDO.— Stay, stay—Not so fast,
You dream'd the Prince, remember.
SEGISMUND.— Then in dream
Revenged it only.
CLOTALDO.—True. But as they say
Dreams are rough copies of the waking soul
Yet uncorrected of the higher Will,
So that men sometimes in their dreams confess
An unsuspected, or forgotten, self;
One must beware to check—ay, if one may,
Stifle ere born, such passion in ourselves
As makes, we see, such havoc with our sleep,
And ill reacts upon the waking day.
And, by the bye, for one test, Segismund,
Between such swearable realities—
Since Dreaming, Madness, Passion, are akin
In missing each that salutary rein
Of reason, and the guiding will of man:
One test, I think, of waking sanity
Shall be that conscious power of self-control,
To curb all passion, but much most of all
That evil and vindictive, that ill squares
With human, and with holy canon less,
Which bids us pardon ev'n our enemies,
And much more those who, out of no ill will,
Mistakenly have taken up the rod
Which heav'n, they think, has put into their hands.
SEGISMUND.—I think I soon shall have to try again—
Sleep has not yet done with me.
CLOTALDO.— Such a sleep.
Take my advice—'tis early yet—the sun
Scarce up above the mountain; go within,
And if the night deceived you, try anew
With morning; morning dreams they say come true.

SEGISMUND.—Oh, rather pray for me a sleep so fast
As shall obliterate dream and waking too.
[*Exit into the tower.*
CLOTALDO.—So sleep; sleep fast: and sleep away those two
Night-potions, and the waking dream between
Which dream thou must believe; and, if to see
Again, poor Segismund! that dream must be.
And yet, and yet, in these our ghostly lives,
Half night, half day, half sleeping, half awake,
How if our waking life, like that of sleep,
Be all a dream in that eternal life
To which we wake not till we sleep in death?
How if, I say, the senses we now trust
For date of sensible comparison—
Ay, ev'n the Reason's self that dates with them,
Should be in essence or intensity
Hereafter so transcended, and awoke
To a perceptive subtlety so keen
As to confess themselves befool'd before,
In all that now they will avouch for most?
One man—like this—but only so much longer
As life is longer than a summer's day,
Believed himself a king upon his throne,
And play'd at hazard with his fellows' lives,
Who cheaply dream'd away their lives to him.
The sailor dream'd of tossing on the flood:
The soldier of his laurels grown in blood:
The lover of the beauty that he knew
Must yet dissolve to dusty residue:
The merchant and the miser of his bags
Of finger'd gold; the beggar of his rags:
And all this stage of earth on which we seem
Such busy actors, and the parts we play'd,
Substantial as the shadow of a shade,
And Dreaming but a dream within a dream!
FIFE.—Was it not said, sir,
By some philosopher as yet unborn,
That any chimney-sweep who for twelve hours
Dreams himself king is happy as the king
Who dreams himself twelve hours a chimney-sweep?

CLOTALDO.—A theme indeed for wiser heads than yours
To moralize upon—How came you here?—
FIFE.—Not of my own will, I assure you, sir.
No matter for myself: but I would know
About my mistress—I mean, master—
CLOTALDO.— Oh,
Now I remember—Well, your master-mistress
Is well, and deftly on its errand speeds,
As you shall—if you can but hold your tongue.
Can you?
FIFE.— I'd rather be at home again.
CLOTALDO.—Where you shall be the quicker if while here
You can keep silence.
FIFE.— I may whistle, then?
Which by the virtue of my name I do,
And also as a reasonable test
Of waking sanity—
CLOTALDO.— Well, whistle then;
And for another reason you forgot,
That while you whistle, you can chatter not.
Only remember—if you quit this pass—
FIFE.—(His rhymes are out, or he had call'd it spot)—
CLOTALDO.—A bullet brings you to.
I must forthwith to court to tell the King
The issue of this lamentable day,
That buries all his hope in night. [*To Fife*] Farewell.
Remember.
FIFE.— But a moment—but a word!
When shall I see my mis—mas—
CLOTALDO.— Be content:
All in good time; and then, and not before,
Never to miss your master any more. [*Exit.*
FIFE.—Such talk of dreaming—dreaming—I begin
To doubt if I be dreaming I am Fife,
Who with a lad who call'd herself a boy
Because—I doubt there's some confusion here—
He wore no petticoat, came on a time
Riding from Muscovy on half a horse,
Who must have dreamt she was a horse entire,
To cant me off upon the ground my hinder face

Under this tower, wall-eyed and musket-tongued,
With sentinels a-pacing up and down,
Crying All's well when all is far from well,
All the day long, and all the night, until
I dream—if what is dreaming be not waking—
Of bells a-tolling and processions rolling
With candles, crosses, banners, San-benitos,
Of which I wear the flamy-finingest,
Through streets and places throng'd with fiery faces
To some back platform—
Oh, I shall take a fire into my hand
With thinking of my own dear Muscovy—
Only just over that Sierra there,
By which we tumbled headlong into—No-land.
Now, if without a bullet after me,
I could but get a peep of my old home—
Perhaps of my own mule to take me there—
All's still—perhaps the gentlemen within
Are dreaming it is night behind their masks—
God send 'em a good nightmare!—Now then—Hark!
Voices—and up the rocks—and armèd men
Climbing like cats—Puss in the corner then. [*He hides.*

Enter Soldiers cautiously up the rocks.

CAPTAIN.—This is the frontier pass, at any rate,
Where Poland ends and Muscovy begins.
SOLDIER.—We must be close upon the tower, I know,
That half way up the mountain lies ensconced.
CAPTAIN.—How know you that?
FIRST SOLDIER.— He told me so—the Page
Who put us on the scent.
SECOND SOLDIER.— And, as I think,
Will soon be here to run it down with us.
CAPTAIN.—Meantime, our horses on these ugly rocks
Useless, and worse than useless with their clatter—
Leave them behind, with one or two in charge,
And softly, softly, softly.
FIRST SOLDIER.— There it is!
SECOND SOLDIER.—There what?—
FIRST SOLDIER.— The tower—the fortress—

SECOND SOLDIER.— That the tower!—
FIRST SOLDIER.—That mouse-trap! We could pitch it down the rocks
With our own hands.
SECOND SOLDIER.— The rocks it hangs among
Dwarf its proportions and conceal its strength;
Larger and stronger than you think.
FIRST SOLDIER.— No matter;
No place for Poland's Prince to be shut up in.
At it at once!
CAPTAIN.—No—no—I tell you wait—
Till those within give signal. For as yet
We know not who side with us, and the fort
Is strong in man and musket.
A SOLDIER.— Shame to wait
For odds with such a cause at stake.
CAPTAIN.— Because
Of such a cause at stake we wait for odds—
For if not won at once, for ever lost:
For any long resistance on their part
Would bring Basilio's force to succor them
Ere we had rescued him we come to rescue.
So softly, softly, softly, still—
A SOLDIER [*discovering Fife*].—Hilloa!
FIRST SOLDIER.—Hilloa! Here's some one skulking—
SECOND SOLDIER.— Seize and gag him!
THIRD SOLDIER.—Stab him at once, say I: the only way
To make all sure.
FOURTH SOLDIER.— Hold, every man of you!
And down upon your knees!—Why, 'tis the Prince!
FIRST SOLDIER.—The Prince!—
FOURTH SOLDIER.— Oh, I should know him anywhere,
And anyhow disguised.
FIRST SOLDIER.— But the Prince is chain'd.
SECOND SOLDIER.—And of a loftier presence—
FOURTH SOLDIER.— 'Tis he, I tell you;
Only bewilder'd as he was before.
God save your Royal Highness! On our knees
Beseech you answer us!
FIFE.— Just as you please.

Well—'tis this country's custom, I suppose,
To take a poor man every now and then
And set him on the throne; just for the fun
Of tumbling him again into the dirt.
And now my turn is come. 'Tis very pretty.

A SOLDIER.—His wits have been distemper'd with their drugs.
But do you ask him, Captain.

CAPTAIN.— On my knees,
And in the name of all who kneel with me,
I do beseech your Highness answer to
Your royal title.

FIFE.— Still, just as you please.
In my own poor opinion of myself—
But that may all be dreaming, which it seems
Is very much the fashion in this country—
No Polish prince at all, but a poor lad
From Muscovy; where only help me back,
I promise never to contest the crown
Of Poland with whatever gentleman
You fancy to set up.

FIRST SOLDIER.—From Muscovy?

SECOND SOLDIER.—A spy then—

THIRD SOLDIER.— Of Astolfo's—

FIRST SOLDIER.— Spy! a spy!—

SECOND SOLDIER.—Hang him at once!

FIFE.— No, pray don't dream of that!

A SOLDIER.—How dared you then set yourself up for our
Prince Segismund?

FIFE.— *I* set up!—I like that—
When 'twas yourselves be-segismunded me.

CAPTAIN.—No matter—Look!—The signal from the tower.
Prince Segismund!

A SOLDIER [*from the tower*].—Prince Segismund!

CAPTAIN.— All's well.
Clotaldo safe secured?—

A SOLDIER [*from the tower*].—No—by ill luck,
Instead of coming in, as we had look'd for,
He sprang on horse at once, and off at gallop.

CAPTAIN.—To Court, no doubt—a blunder that—And yet
Perchance a blunder that may work as well
As better forethought. Having no suspicion,

So will he carry none where his not going
Were of itself suspicious. But of those
Within, who side with us?

A SOLDIER.— Oh, one and all
To the last man, persuaded or compell'd.

CAPTAIN.—Enough: whatever be to be retrieved,
No moment to be lost. For though Clotaldo
Have no revolt to tell of in the tower,
The capital will soon awake to ours,
And the King's force come blazing after us.
Where is the Prince?

A SOLDIER.— Within; so fast asleep
We woke him not ev'n striking off the chain
We had so cursedly helped bind him with,
Not knowing what we did; but too ashamed
Not to undo ourselves what we had done.

CAPTAIN.—No matter, nor by whosesoever hands,
Provided done. Come; we will bring him forth
Out of that stony darkness here abroad,
Where air and sunshine sooner shall disperse
The sleepy fume which they have drugg'd him with.

[*They enter the tower, and thence bring out Segismund asleep on a pallet, and set him in the middle of the stage.*

CAPTAIN.—Still, still so dead asleep, the very noise
And motion that we make in carrying him
Stirs not a leaf in all the living tree.

A SOLDIER.—If living—But if by some inward blow
Forever and irrevocably fell'd
By what strikes deeper to the root than sleep?

FIRST SOLDIER.—He's dead! He's dead! They've killed him—

SECOND SOLDIER.— No—he breathes—
And the heart beats—and now he breathes again
Deeply, as one about to shake away
The load of sleep.

CAPTAIN.— Come, let us all kneel round,
And with a blast of warlike instruments,
And acclamation of all loyal hearts,
Rouse and restore him to his royal right,
From which no royal wrong shall drive him more.

[*They all kneel round his bed: trumpets, drums.*

SOLDIERS.—Segismund! Segismund! Prince Segismund!
King Segismund! Down with Basilio!
Down with Astolfo! Segismund our King!
FIRST SOLDIER.—He stares upon us wildly. He cannot speak.
SECOND SOLDIER.—I said so—driv'n him mad.
THIRD SOLDIER.— Speak to him, Captain.
CAPTAIN.—Oh Royal Segismund, our Prince and King,
Look on us—listen to us—answer us,
Your faithful soldiery and subjects, now
About you kneeling, but on fire to rise
And cleave a passage through your enemies,
Until we seat you on your lawful throne.
For though your father, King Basilio,
Now King of Poland, jealous of the stars
That prophesy his setting with your rise,
Here holds you ignominiously eclipsed,
And would Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy,
Mount to the throne of Poland after him;
So will not we, your loyal soldiery
And subjects; neither those of us now first
Apprised of your existence and your right:
Nor those that hitherto deluded by
Allegiance false, their vizors now fling down,
And craving pardon on their knees with us
For that unconscious disloyalty,
Offer with us the service of their blood;
Not only we and they; but at our heels
The heart, if not the bulk, of Poland follows
To join their voices and their arms with ours,
In vindicating with our lives our own
Prince Segismund to Poland and her throne.
SOLDIERS.—Segismund, Segismund, Prince Segismund!
Our own King Segismund. [*They all rise.*
SEGISMUND.—Again? So soon?—What, not yet done with me?
The sun is little higher up, I think,
Than when I last lay down,
To bury in the depth of your own sea
You that infest its shallows.
CAPTAIN.— Sir!
SEGISMUND.— And now,

Not in a palace, not in the fine clothes
We all were in; but here, in the old place,
And in our old accoutrement—
Only your vizors off, and lips unlockt
To mock me with that idle title—

CAPTAIN.— Nay,
Indeed no idle title, but your own,
Then, now, and now forever. For, behold,
Ev'n as I speak, the mountain passes fill
And bristle with the advancing soldiery
That glitters in your rising glory, sir;
And, at our signal, echo to our cry,
"Segismund, King of Poland!" [*Shouts and trumpets.*

SEGISMUND.— Oh, how cheap
The muster of a countless host of shadows,
As impotent to do with as to keep!
All this they said before—to softer music.

CAPTAIN.—Soft music, sir, to what indeed were shadows,
That, following the sunshine of a Court,
Shall back be brought with it—if shadows still,
Yet to substantial reckoning.

SEGISMUND.— They shall?
The white-hair'd and white-wanded chamberlain,
So busy with his wand too—the old King
That I was somewhat hard on—he had been
Hard upon me—and the fine feather'd Prince
Who crow'd so loud—my cousin—and another,
Another cousin, we will not bear hard on—
And—But Clotaldo?

CAPTAIN.— Fled, my Lord, but close
Pursued; and then—

SEGISMUND.— Then, as he fled before,
And after he had sworn it on his knees,
Came back to take me—where I am!—No more,
No more of this! Away with you! Begone!
Whether but visions of ambitious night
That morning ought to scatter, or grown out
Of night's proportions you invade the day
To scare me from my little wits yet left,

Begone! I know I must be near awake,
Knowing I dream; or, if not at my voice,
Then vanish at the clapping of my hands,
Or take this foolish fellow for your sport:
Dressing me up in visionary glories,
Which the first air of waking consciousness
Scatters as fast as from the almander*—
That, waking one fine morning in full flower,
One rougher insurrection of the breeze
Of all her sudden honor disadorns
To the last blossom, and she stands again
The winter-naked scare-crow that she was!

CAPTAIN.—I know not what to do, nor what to say,
With all this dreaming; I begin to doubt
They have driv'n him mad indeed, and he and we
Are lost together.

A SOLDIER [*to Captain*].—Stay, stay; I remember—
Hark in your ear a moment. [*Whispers.*

CAPTAIN.— So—so—so?—
Oh, now indeed I do not wonder, sir,
Your senses dazzle under practices
Which treason, shrinking from its own device,
Would now persuade you only was a dream;
But waking was as absolute as this
You wake in now, as some who saw you then,
Prince as you were and are, can testify:
Not only saw, but under false allegiance
Laid hands upon—

FIRST SOLDIER.— I, to my shame!

SECOND SOLDIER.— And I!

CAPTAIN.—Who, to wipe out that shame, have been the first
To stir and lead us—Hark! [*Shouts, trumpets.*

A SOLDIER.— Our forces, sir,
Challenging King Basilio's, now in sight,
And bearing down upon us.

CAPTAIN.— Sir, you hear;
A little hesitation and delay,
And all is lost—your own right, and the lives

* Almander, or almandre, Chaucer's word for almond-tree, "Romaunt of the Rose," 1363.

Of those who now maintain it at that cost;
With you all saved and won; without, all lost.
That former recognition of your right
Grant but a dream, if you will have it so;
Great things forecast themselves by shadows great:
Or will you have it, this like that dream too,
People, and place, and time itself, all dream—
Yet, being in't, and as the shadows come
Quicker and thicker than you can escape,
Adopt your visionary soldiery,
Who, having struck a solid chain away,
Now put an airy sword into your hand,
And harnessing you piecemeal till you stand
Amidst us all complete in glittering,
If unsubstantial, steel—

ROSAURA [*without*].—The Prince! The Prince!

CAPTAIN.—Who calls for him?

A SOLDIER.— The Page who spurr'd us hither,
And now, dismounted from a foaming horse—

Enter Rosaura.

ROSAURA.—Where is—but where I need no further ask
Where the majestic presence, all in arms,
Mutely proclaims and vindicates himself.

FIFE.—My darling Lady-lord—

ROSAURA.— My own good Fife,
Keep to my side—and silence!—Oh, my Lord,
For the third time behold me here where first
You saw me, by a happy misadventure
Losing my own way here to find it out
For you to follow with these loyal men,
Adding the moment of my little cause
To yours; which, so much mightier as it is,
By a strange chance runs hand in hand with mine;
The self-same foe who now pretends your right,
Withholding mine—that, of itself alone,
I know the royal blood that runs in you
Would vindicate, regardless of your own:
The right of injured innocence; and, more,
Spite of this epicene attire, a woman's;

And of a noble stock I will not name
Till I, who brought it, have retrieved the shame.
Whom Duke Astolfo, Prince of Muscovy,
With all the solemn vows of wedlock won,
And would have wedded, as I do believe,
Had not the cry of Poland for a Prince
Call'd him from Muscovy to join the prize
Of Poland with the fair Estrella's eyes.
I, following him hither, as you saw,
Was cast upon these rocks; arrested by
Clotaldo: who, for an old debt of love
He owes my family, with all his might
Served, and had served me further, till my cause
Clash'd with his duty to his sovereign,
Which, as became a loyal subject, sir,
(And never sovereign had a loyaller,)
Was still his first. He carried me to Court,
Where for the second time, I cross'd your path;
Where, as I watch'd my opportunity,
Suddenly broke this public passion out;
Which, drowning private into public wrong,
Yet swiftlier sweeps it to revenge along.

SEGISMUND.—Oh God, if this be dreaming, charge it not
To burst the channel of enclosing sleep
And drown the waking reason! Not to dream
Only what dreamt shall once or twice again
Return to buzz about the sleeping brain
Till shaken off forever—
But reassailing one so quick, so thick—
The very figure and the circumstance
Of sense-confest reality foregone
In so-call'd dream so palpably repeated,
The copy so like the original,
We know not which is which; and dream so-call'd
Itself inweaving so inextricably
Into the tissue of acknowledged truth;
The very figures that empeople it
Returning to assert themselves no phantoms
In something so much like meridian day,
And in the very place that not my worst

And veriest disenchanter shall deny
For the too well-remember'd theatre
Of my long tragedy—Strike up the drums!
If this be Truth, and all of us awake,
Indeed a famous quarrel is at stake:
If but a Vision I will see it out,
And, drive the Dream, I can but join the rout.

CAPTAIN.—And in good time, sir, for a palpable
Touchstone of truth and rightful vengeance too,
Here is Clotaldo taken.

SOLDIERS.— In with him!
In with the traitor! [*Clotaldo brought in.*

SEGISMUND.— Ay, Clotaldo, indeed—
Himself—in his old habit—his old self—
What! back again, Clotaldo, for a while
To swear me this for truth, and afterwards
All for a dreaming lie?

CLOTALDO.— Awake or dreaming,
Down with that sword, and down these traitors theirs,
Drawn in rebellion 'gainst their Sovereign.

SEGISMUND [*about to strike*].—Traitor! Traitor yourself!—
But soft—soft—soft!—
You told me, not so very long ago,
Awake or dreaming—I forget—my brain
Is not so clear about it—but I know
One test you gave me to discern between,
Which mad and dreaming people cannot master;
Or if the dreamer could, so best secure
A comfortable waking—Was't not so?—
[*To Rosaura*] Needs not your intercession now, you see,
As in the dream before—
Clotaldo, rough old nurse and tutor too
That only traitor wert, to me if true—
Give him his sword; set him on a fresh horse;
Conduct him safely through my rebel force;
And so God speed him to his sovereign's side!
Give me your hand; and whether all awake
Or all a-dreaming, ride, Clotaldo, ride—
Dream-swift—for fear we dreams should overtake.
[*A battle may be supposed to take place.*

SCENE II.—*A wooded pass near the field of battle: drums, trumpets, and firing. Cries of "God save Basilio! Segismund." Enter Fife, running.*

FIFE.—God save them both, and save them all! say I!—
Oh—what hot work!—Whichever way one turns
The whistling bullet at one's ears—I've drifted
Far from my mad young—master—whom I saw
Tossing upon the very crest of battle,
Beside the Prince—God save her first of all!
With all my heart I say and pray—and so
Commend her to His keeping—bang!—bang!—bang!—
And for myself—scarce worth His thinking of—
I'll see what I can do to save myself
Behind this rock, until the storm blows over.
[*Skirmishes, shouts, firing.*

Enter King Basilio, Astolfo, and Clotaldo.

KING.—The day is lost!
ASTOLFO.— Do not despair—the rebels—
KING.—Alas! the vanquished only are the rebels.
CLOTALDO.—Ev'n if this battle lost us, 'tis but one
Gain'd on their side, if you not lost in it;
Another moment and too late: at once
Take horse, and to the capital, my liege,
Where in some safe and holy sanctuary
Save Poland in your person.
ASTOLFO.— Be persuaded:
You know your son: have tasted of his temper;
At his first onset threatening unprovoked
The crime predicted for his last and worst.
How whetted now with such a taste of blood,
And thus far conquest!
KING.— Ay, and how he fought!
Oh how he fought, Astolfo; ranks of men
Falling as swathes of grass before the mower;
I could but pause to gaze at him, although,
Like the pale horseman of the Apocalypse,
Each moment brought him nearer—Yet I say,

I could but pause and gaze on him, and pray
Poland had such a warrior for her king.

ASTOLFO.—The cry of triumph on the other side
Gains ground upon us here—there's but a moment
For you, my liege, to do, for me to speak,
Who back must to the field, and what man may,
Do, to retrieve the fortune of the day. [*Firing.*

FIFE [*falling forward, shot*].—Oh, Lord, have mercy on me.

KING.— What a shriek—
Oh, some poor creature wounded in a cause
Perhaps not worth the loss of one poor life!—
So young too—and no soldier—

FIFE.— A poor lad,
Who choosing play at hide and seek with death,
Just hid where death just came to look for him;
For there's no place, I think, can keep him out,
Once he's his eye upon you. All grows dark—
You glitter finely too—Well—we are dreaming—
But when the bullet's off—Heav'n save the mark!
So tell my mister—mastress— [*Dies.*

KING.—Oh God! How this poor creature's ignorance
Confounds our so-call'd wisdom! Even now
When death has stopt his lips, the wound through which
His soul went out, still with its bloody tongue
Preaching how vain our struggle against fate!
[*Voices within*].—After them! After them! This way! This way!
The day is ours—Down with Basilio.

ASTOLFO.—Fly, sir—

KING.— And slave-like flying not out-ride
The fate which better like a King abide!

Enter Segismund, Rosaura, Soldiers.

SEGISMUND.—Where is the King?

KING [*prostrating himself*].— Behold him—by this late
Anticipation of resistless fate,
Thus underneath your feet his golden crown,
And the white head that wears it, laying down,
His fond resistance hopes to expiate.

SEGISMUND.—Princes and warriors of Poland—you
That stare on this unnatural sight aghast,
Listen to one who, Heav'n-inspired to do
What in its secret wisdom Heav'n forecast,
By that same Heav'n instructed prophet-wise
To justify the present in the past.
What in the sapphire volume of the skies
Is writ by God's own finger misleads none,
But him whose vain and misinstructed eyes,
They mock with misinterpretation,
Or who, mistaking what he rightly read,
Ill commentary makes, or misapplies
Thinking to shirk or thwart it. Which has done
The wisdom of this venerable head;
Who, well provided with the secret key
To that gold alphabet, himself made me,
Himself, I say, the savage he fore-read
Fate somehow should be charged with; nipp'd the growth
Of better nature in constraint and sloth,
That only bring to bear the seed of wrong,
And turn'd the stream to fury whose out-burst
Had kept his lawful channel uncoerced,
And fertilized the land he flow'd along.
Then like to some unskilful duellist,
Who having over-reach'd himself pushing too hard
His foe, or but a moment off his guard—
What odds, when Fate is one's antagonist!—
Nay, more, this royal father, self-dismay'd
At having Fate against himself array'd,
Upon himself the very sword he knew
Should wound him, down upon his bosom drew,
That might well handled, well have wrought; or, kept
Undrawn, have harmless in the scabbard slept.
But Fate shall not by human force be broke,
Nor foil'd by human feint; the Secret learn'd
Against the scholar by that master turn'd
Who to himself reserves the master-stroke.
Witness whereof this venerable Age,

Thrice crown'd as Sire, and Sovereign, and Sage,
Down to the very dust dishonor'd by
The very means he tempted to defy
The irresistible. And shall not I,
Till now the mere dumb instrument that wrought
The battle Fate has with my father fought,
Now the mere mouth-piece of its victory—
Oh, shall not I, the champion's sword laid down,
Be yet more shamed to wear the teacher's gown,
And, blushing at the part I had to play,
Down where that honor'd head I was to lay
By this more just submission of my own,
The treason Fate has forced on me atone?

KING.—Oh, Segismund, in whom I see indeed,
Out of the ashes of my self-extinction
A better self revive; if not beneath
Your feet, beneath your better wisdom bow'd,
The Sovereignty of Poland I resign,
With this its golden symbol; which if thus
Saved with its silver head inviolate,
Shall nevermore be subject to decline;
But when the head that it alights on now
Falls honor'd by the very foe that must,
As all things mortal, lay it in the dust,
Shall star-like shift to his successor's brow.

[Shouts and trumpets. "God save King Segismund!"

SEGISMUND.— For what remains—
As for my own, so for my people's peace,
Astolfo's and Estrella's plighted hands
I disunite, and taking hers to mine,
His to one yet more dearly his resign.

[Shouts: "God save Estrella, Queen of Poland!"

SEGISMUND *[to Clotaldo]*.— You
That with unflinching duty to your King,
Till countermanded by the mightier Power,
Have held your Prince a captive in the tower,
Henceforth as strictly guard him on the throne,
No less my people's keeper than my own.
You stare upon me all, amazed to hear

The word of civil justice from such lips
As never yet seem'd tuned to such discourse.
But listen—In that same enchanted tower,
Not long ago I learn'd it from a dream
Expounded by this ancient prophet here;
And which he told me, should it come again,
How I should bear myself beneath it; not
As then with angry passion all on fire,
Arguing and making a distemper'd soul;
But ev'n with justice, mercy, self-control,
As if the dream I walk'd in were no dream,
And conscience one day to account for it.
A dream it was in which I thought myself,
And you that hail'd me now then hail'd me King,
In a brave palace that was all my own,
Within, and all without it, mine; until,
Drunk with excess of majesty and pride,
Methought I tower'd so high and swell'd so wide,
That of myself I burst the glittering bubble,
That my ambition had about me blown,
And all again was darkness. Such a dream
As this in which I may be walking now;
Dispensing solemn justice to you shadows,
Who make believe to listen; but anon,
With all your glittering arms and equipage,
King, princes, captains, warriors, plume and steel,
Ay, ev'n with all your airy theatre,
May flit into the air you seem to rend
With acclamation, leaving me to wake
In the dark tower; or dreaming that I wake
From this that waking is; or this and that
Both waking or both dreaming; such a doubt
Confounds and clouds our mortal life about.
And, whether wake or dreaming; this I know,
How dream-wise human glories come and go;
Whose momentary tenure not to break,
Walking as one who knows he soon may wake
So fairly carry the full cup, so well
Disorder'd insolence and passion quell,

That there be nothing after to upbraid
Dreamer or doer in the part he play'd,
Whether To-morrow's dawn shall break the spell,
Or the Last Trumpet of the eternal Day,
When Dreaming with the Night shall pass away.

[*Exeunt.*

COQUELIN AS MASCARILLE.

Photogravure from a photograph by Sarony.

One of Coquelin's most successful rôles is that of Mascarille in Molière's play, "Les Précieuses Ridicules." Mascarille is a tricky valet, who is disguised by his master to represent a marquis. A number of silly young ladies are taken in by this deception, and the pranks of the disguised valet furnish a strong element of humor to the play.

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THE MISANTHROPE

—

BY

JEAN-BAPTISTE POQUELIN MOLIÈRE

[*Translated by Charles Heron Wall*]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ALCESTE, in love with Célimène.
PHILINTE, friend to Alceste.
ORONTE, in love with Célimène.
ACASTE, CLITANDRE, } Marquises.
CÉLIMÈNE, beloved by Alceste.
ELIANTE, cousin to Célimène.
ARSINOË, friend to Célimène.
BASQUE, servant to Célimène.
DUBOIS, servant to Alceste.
An Officer of the Maréchaussée of France.

—

The scene is at Paris in Célimène's house.

THE MISANTHROPE

ACT FIRST

Scene I.

Philinte, Alceste

PHILINTE. What is it? What can be the matter with you?

ALCESTE [*seated*]. Out of my sight!

PHILINTE. But still, tell me what new whim . . .

ALCESTE. Leave me, I tell you, and go and hide yourself.

PHILINTE. But you might, at any rate, listen to me without getting angry.

ALCESTE. I will be angry, and I will not listen.

PHILINTE. I hardly understand you, Alceste, in your sudden outburst of spleen; and although we are friends, I am one of the first . . .

ALCESTE [*rising abruptly*]. I, your friend! No: strike my name from off your list, if you please; I have certainly, till now, professed to be so, but after what I have just discovered in you, I tell you plainly that I am your friend no longer. I have no wish for a place in corrupt hearts.

PHILINTE. I am very guilty, it seems, Alceste.

ALCESTE. Guilty! you ought to die of mere shame. There is no possible excuse for such an action, and every man of honor would set his face against it. I find you overwhelming a man with caresses and professing for him the utmost tenderness. I find you adding to the transport of your embraces protestations, offers, vows of devotion, yet when afterwards I ask you who the man is, you can hardly tell me his name; your love for him vanishes the moment you leave him, and you speak of him as of a person entirely indifferent to you. 'Sdeath! it is an unworthy, cowardly, base thing to demean one's self so far

as to belie one's own feelings; and if I had been unfortunate enough to have done such a thing, I would, out of sheer grief, go at once and hang myself.

PHILINTE. I really do not see that this is a case of hanging, and I most humbly beg you will allow me to mitigate a little the severity of your sentence, so that I need not go and hang myself for this matter, if you please.

ALCESTE. How unseemly this jesting of yours!

PHILINTE. But, seriously, what would you have me do?

ALCESTE. I would have you be sincere; and, like a man of honor, never speak a word that does not come from the heart.

PHILINTE. When a man comes joyfully to embrace you, it is but right to pay him back in his own coin, respond, as well as you can, to his ardor, and return him offer for offer and promise for promise.

ALCESTE. No, I cannot endure this contemptible custom affected by most of you men of fashion, and there is nothing I hate so much as the grimaces of all those great protestation-mongers, those obsequious dealers of unmeaning embraces, those obliging utterers of empty words, who vie with each other in civilities, and treat in the same manner the honorable man and the vain fool. What advantage do you find in being the object of the endearments of a man who makes vows to you of friendship, faith, zeal, esteem, tenderness: who crushes you with promises; who bestows on you a brilliant encomium; when he rushes to do the same to the first snob he meets? No, no one who respects himself would care for esteem so debased; and even that which we most prize has little value if it includes the whole human race. Friendship should be based on esteem, but to esteem everybody is to esteem nobody. Since you yield to these vices of the age, 'sdeath! I will have nothing to do with you. I utterly reject the condescending affability which makes no distinctions of merit. I wish to be loved for myself; and, to cut the matter short, the friend of all mankind is no friend of mine.

PHILINTE. But while we are in the world, we must pay a few outward civilities which custom demands.

ALCESTE. No, I tell you; we should pitilessly condemn this

shameful display of hollow friendships. I would have everyone acquit himself like a man; under every circumstance speak his mind freely, and never allow his real feelings to disguise themselves under vain compliments.

PHILINTE. There are many cases when unreserved frankness would be both ridiculous and objectionable; and sometimes—no offence to your austere honor—it is right to conceal the thoughts we have. Would it be proper and befitting to tell a hundred people about us, what we think of them? And when we have to do with a man we hate, or who displeases us, ought we to go and tell him the plain facts of the case?

ALCESTE. Yes.

PHILINTE. What! you would tell that ancient dame, Emilia, that at her age it is not becoming to set up for a beauty, and that the paint she lays on, shocks everybody?

ALCESTE. Certainly.

PHILINTE. You would tell Dorilas that he is too importunate, and that everyone at Court is tired of hearing him relate his own deeds of bravery, and speak of the greatness of his house?

ALCESTE. Decidedly.

PHILINTE. You are joking.

ALCESTE. I am not; and on this point I will spare no one. My eyes are too much offended, and, whether at Court or in town, I find only objects to provoke my wrath. To see men behave as they do makes me a prey to melancholy and deep grief. I find everywhere nothing but base flattery, injustice, self-interest, treachery, and deceit. I can bear it no longer, and my intention is to break with all mankind.

PHILINTE. This philosophical moroseness is somewhat too fierce. Pray excuse me, if I laugh to see you in these gloomy fits, and I can fancy I see in us two, brought up under the same care, those brothers which "The School for Husbands" describes, and of whom . . .

ALCESTE. Good heavens! spare me your insipid comparisons.

PHILINTE. Come, seriously, cease to give way to these vagaries, for all the trouble you may take will not alter the world. Since plain speaking has such charms for you,

I will tell you frankly that wherever you go, people laugh at this morbid temper of yours; that so much anger against the customs of the times makes you ridiculous in the eyes of a great many.

ALCESTE. So much the better, I say, so much the better; it is all I ask for, it is a very good sign in my favor, and I rejoice at it. Men are all alike, so odious to me, that I should be very sorry for their good opinion.

PHILINTE. You are greatly incensed against human nature!

ALCESTE. Yes, I have conceived for it an intense hatred.

PHILINTE. Will all poor mortals, without exception, be included in this great hatred? There are surely some in our days . . .

ALCESTE. No, there are no exceptions, and I hate all men alike. Some, because they are wicked and mischievous; others, because they are lenient towards the wicked, and do not bear to them that deep contempt which vice ought to inspire in honest hearts. You can see to what an unjust excess this toleration is carried in the case with that downright villain, against whom I have a lawsuit. Everybody can see through the mask of the treacherous rascal; he is known everywhere for what he is; and his soft looks and honeyed words only deceive those to whom he is a stranger. Everyone knows that this abject scoundrel, who deserves to be exposed, has pushed his way in the world through mean and dirty jobs; and that the lofty position to which these have brought him, makes merit repine and virtue blush. Whatever shameful epithets you may apply to him, there is no one to take up the defence of his wretched honor; call him infamous cheat, and cursed villain: everyone agrees to it, and nobody contradicts you; yet his face is everywhere welcome; he is received and entertained everywhere; people smile upon him; he worms himself into every society; and if by canvassing there is any preferment to be competed for, you will see him carry it off over the heads of the most honest. 'Sdeath! this tampering with vice kills me, and I am seized at times with a terrible longing to fly away into some desert, far from the approach of men.

PHILINTE. Alas! let us trouble ourselves less about the man-

ners of the age, and have a little indulgence for human nature. Let us not examine it with such severity; but look with more forbearance upon its defects. The world requires a more pliant virtue, and we may err through too much zeal. A sound judgment avoids all extremes, and bids us be wise with moderation. The unbending severity of the virtues of olden times clashes too much with the customs and manners of our age. It requires too much perfection in mortals; we should yield to the times without obstinacy, and it is the greatest of follies to wish to reform all mankind. I, like you, notice every day a hundred things which would be better if ordered otherwise. But whatever I may discover at each step, men do not see me breaking forth into anger as you do; I take them quietly as they are, I accustom myself to bear with what they do, and I believe that, whether at Court or in the city, my placidity is as philosophical as your wrath.

ALCESTE. But this placidity, sir—you who reason so well—will nothing ruffle this same placidity? If, perchance, a friend should betray you; if, in order to get your property, a trap were laid, or injurious reports spread about; would you see all this without indignation?

PHILINTE. Yes, I look upon those defects so offensive to your mind as vices inherent in human nature, and my mind is no more shocked at seeing a man dishonest, unjust, and selfish, than at seeing vultures ravenous after carnage, monkeys mischievous, and wolves greedy of blood.

ALCESTE. What! Shall I see myself deceived, slandered, robbed, without being . . . 'Sdeath! I will not speak to you at all, when your reasoning is so full of folly.

PHILINTE. You would indeed do well to keep silence. Rail a little less against your adversary, and bestow more care on your lawsuit.

ALCESTE. I will bestow none upon it; of that I am determined.

PHILINTE. But whom can you expect to plead for you?

ALCESTE. Whom? Reason, my just right, equity.

PHILINTE. Will you not see any of the judges?

ALCESTE. Why should I? Is my cause unjust or doubtful?

PHILINTE. I agree with you that it is not; but the league against you is serious and . . .

ALCESTE. I am resolved not to move a step in the matter. Either I am right or I am wrong.

PHILINTE. Do not be over-confident.

ALCESTE. I will not stir.

PHILINTE. Your adversary is powerful, and may by his intrigues persuade . . .

ALCESTE. I care not.

PHILINTE. You will do wrong.

ALCESTE. Be it so. We shall see what comes of it.

PHILINTE. But . . .

ALCESTE. I shall have the pleasure of losing my lawsuit.

PHILINTE. But still . . .

ALCESTE. I shall see in this trial whether men will have impudence enough—will be wicked, villainous, and perverse enough—to do me this injustice in the face of the whole world.

PHILINTE. What a man!

ALCESTE. I would give up a great deal to have the pleasure of losing my suit.

PHILINTE. If people heard you speak in that way, they would laugh at you in good earnest, Alceste.

ALCESTE. So much the worse for those who laughed.

PHILINTE. But this rectitude which you claim so loudly; this thorough-going integrity, in which you entrench yourself, do you find them in her you love? Being, as it seems, so much at variance with the whole human race, I am greatly astonished that, in spite of all that can render it odious, you have chosen in it what charms your eyes. What surprises me still more, is the strange choice which your heart has made. The sincere Eliante is kindly disposed towards you, the prude Arsinoë casts longing eyes upon you; yet you reject their vows, and suffer yourself to be led in chains by Célimène, whose coquettish disposition and malicious wit are so much in accordance with the manners of our age! How is it that, bearing such deep hatred to these manners, you can put up with them in the person you love? In so sweet a charmer are they no longer failings? Are you blind to them, or do you excuse them?

ALCESTE. No. My love for this young widow does not make

me blind to her faults; and however great may be the passion I have for her, I am the first to see them and to blame them. I confess my weakness, for, in spite of myself, she has the art of pleasing me. It is in vain that I see her defects, and in vain that I blame her for them: I love her in spite of all her imperfections; her charms prove stronger than I. But that my sincere love will purify her heart of all the vices of the times, I have no doubt.

PHILINTE. If you succeed in that, you will do no small thing. So you really believe that she loves you?

ALCESTE. Indeed I do! I should not love her if I did not think so.

PHILINTE. But if you are so sure of her love, why do your rivals cause you such uneasiness?

ALCESTE. It is because a heart deeply in love claims all for itself. I am here to-day simply with the object of telling her what my feelings are on this point.

PHILINTE. As far as I am concerned, it is her cousin Eliante I would love. Her heart, which holds you in great esteem, is truthful and sincere, and you would have made in her a much wiser choice.

ALCESTE. It is true; my reason tells me so every day, but reason does not rule love.

PHILINTE. I have great misgivings about your passion, and your hope might . . .

Scene II.

Oronte, Alceste, Philinte

ORONTE [*to Alceste*]. I learnt just now that Eliante and Célimène are gone out to make some purchases; but, as I was told that you were here, I came up to say, in all sincerity of heart, that I have conceived for you an incredible esteem; and that, for a long time, this esteem has given me an ardent desire to be numbered among your friends. Yes, I love to render justice to true merit, and I long to be united to you in the close bond of friendship. I think that a warm friend, and one of my stand-

ing, is assuredly not to be despised. [*During this discourse of Oronte, Alceste is thoughtful, and does not seem aware that he is spoken to, until Oronte says to him:* With your leave, it is to you that I am speaking.

ALCESTE. To me, sir?

ORONTE. To you. Does it in any way wound your feelings?

ALCESTE. Not in the least; but my surprise is great. I did not expect this homage to be paid to me.

ORONTE. The esteem I feel for you ought not to surprise you, and you can claim it from the whole world . . .

ALCESTE. Sir . . .

ORONTE. The whole kingdom contains no merit more dazzling than that which is to be found in you.

ALCESTE. Sir . . .

ORONTE. Yes. I consider you superior to the highest amongst us.

ALCESTE. Sir . . .

ORONTE. May Heaven strike me dead if I lie! And in order to convince you of my feelings, allow me, in this place, to embrace you with all my heart, and to solicit a place in your affections. Come, your hand, if you please. Will you promise me your friendship?

ALCESTE. Sir . . .

ORONTE. What! you refuse me?

ALCESTE. Sir, it is too great an honor you wish to pay me; but friendship requires a little more caution, and we surely profane its name when we lightly make use of it. Such a compact ought to spring from judgment and choice, and before we bind ourselves we ought to be better acquainted. Our dispositions might differ so greatly as to make us both heartily repent of the bargain.

ORONTE. Upon my word, you speak like a sensible man, and I esteem you all the more for it. Let us then leave the forming of such pleasant ties to time; but meanwhile believe that I am entirely at your service. If some overture is to be made for you at Court, everyone knows that I am in favor with the king, that I have his private ear, and that really he behaves in all things most kindly to me. In short, believe that I am in everything and at all times at your disposal. As you are a man of great judg-

ment, I come, by way of beginning this happy bond of friendship, to read you a sonnet which I have lately composed and to ask you if I should do well to publish it.

ALCESTE. Sir, I am ill qualified to decide on such a matter; pray excuse me.

ORONTE. Why?

ALCESTE. I have the weakness of being a little too sincere about those things.

ORONTE. Sincerity is what I ask of you; and I should have reason to complain if, when I come to you in order to hear the plain truth, you frustrate my purpose by concealing anything from me.

ALCESTE. If it is thus you look upon it, sir, I consent.

ORONTE. *Sonnet.* It is a sonnet. . . . *Hope.* . . . It is a lady who had given some encouragement to my love. *Hope.* . . . These are not those long, pompous verses; but soft, tender, languishing little lines. [*At every one of these interruptions he looks at Alceste.*

ALCESTE. We shall see.

ORONTE. *Hope.* . . . I do not know whether the style will seem clear and easy to you, and whether you will be satisfied with my choice of words.

ALCESTE. We shall see, sir.

ORONTE. Besides, you must know that I was only a quarter of an hour composing it.

ALCESTE. Come, sir, time has nothing to do with the matter.

ORONTE [*reads*].—

Hope, it is true, can ease our pain*
And rock awhile our hapless mind,
But, Phyllis, what a sorry gain
When nothing pleasant walks behind.

PHILINTE. I think this beginning charming!

ALCESTE [*aside to Philinte*]. What! you dare to find that charming?

ORONTE. Your complaisance was great indeed,
But better 'twere to clip its scope,
And not to such expense proceed,
If you could give me—only hope.

PHILINTE. Ah! in what charming terms those things are said!

* The sonnet is thought to have been written by Benserade.

ALCESTE [*aside to Philinte*]. Shame on you, you vile flatterer! you praise that rubbish?

ORONTE. If age—long expectation's pest—
The ardor of my zeal must test,
To death at last I'll fly.
My purpose braves your ev'ry care;
Fair Phyllis, men will soon despair
When doomed to hope for aye.

PHILINTE. The fall is pretty, lovable, admirable.

ALCESTE [*aside to Philinte*]. Plague take your fall, wretched sycophant! Deuce take you! I wish it had broken your neck.

PHILINTE. I have never heard verses so skilfully turned.

ALCESTE [*aside*]. Zounds!

ORONTE [*to Philinte*]. You are flattering me, and you think perhaps . . .

PHILINTE. No, indeed, I am not flattering you at all.

ALCESTE [*aside*]. Ha! what else are you doing, impostor?

ORONTE [*to Alceste*]. But you, you remember the agreement we made, and I beg of you to speak to me in all sincerity.

ALCESTE. Sir, this is at all times a delicate matter, and we always like people to praise us for our genius. But one day I was saying to someone, whose name I will not mention, on seeing verses of his composition, that a gentleman should carefully guard against the hankering after authorship which is apt to seize us; that he should check the great propensity we have of making a display of such pastimes; and that by too great an eagerness to show our productions we run the risk of making ourselves ridiculous.

ORONTE. Do you mean me to understand by this that I am wrong in wishing . . .

ALCESTE. I do not say that. But I said to him that a lifeless composition is very wearisome to those who read it; that such a weakness is sufficient to make a man the object of unkind remarks: that, although in other respects he may have the most sterling qualities, we generally judge of men by their weakest side.

ORONTE. Do you find fault with my sonnet?

ALCESTE. I do not say that. But to keep him from writing, I pointed out to him how in our days that thirst had spoilt many a worthy man.

ORONTE. Do I write badly, and do I resemble in any way . . .

ALCESTE. I do not say that. But, in short, I said to him, what pressing necessity is there for you to rhyme, and what the deuce urges you to put your name in print? If we can forgive the publication of a wretched book, it is only to those unfortunate men who scribble for a living. Believe me; resist the temptation, keep such effusions from public notice, and do not throw away, however you may be tempted, the name of a man of sense and a gentleman which you bear at Court, to take from the hands of a grasping printer, that of a ridiculous and wretched author. This is what I tried to make him understand.

ORONTE. And I think I understand you. But this is all very well. May I know what in my sonnet can . . .

ALCESTE. Truly, you had better shut it up in your cabinet; you have followed bad models, and your expressions are in no way natural. Pray what is: *And rock awhile our hapless mind?* and, *Nothing pleasant walks behind?* also, *And not to such expense proceed, if you could give me only hope?* or, *Fair Phyllis, men will soon despair, when doomed to hope for aye?* This figurative style that people are so vain of, falls far short of good taste and truth. It is a paltry play on words, and mere affectation. Nature never speaks thus. I hate the wretched taste of the age in these matters. Our forefathers, unpolished as they were, understood these things better: and I value less all that is now admired, than an old song which I will repeat to you:

If the king had given me
  Paris town, so great and gay,
And for it I had to flee
  From my lady-love away,
To King Henry I should say,
  Take your Paris back, I pray;
I had liefer love my love, O
  I had liefer love my love.

The versification is not rich, and the style is old. But do

you not see how much better it is than all that trumpery which good sense must abhor, and that here simple nature speaks?

[*Repeats verse.*

This is what a heart truly in love would say. [*To Philinte, who laughs.*] Yes, you may laugh as much as you please, but whatever you men of wit may say, I prefer this to the showy glitter of those false trinkets which everyone admires.

ORONTE. And yet I maintain that my verses are good.

ALCESTE. You have your own reasons for thinking them so; but you will allow me to be of a different opinion, and my reasons to be independent of yours.

ORONTE. I think it sufficient that others prize them.

ALCESTE. No doubt they have the gift of dissimulation which I have not.

ORONTE. Do you really think that you have such a large share of intelligence?

ALCESTE. If I praised your verses, I should have more.

ORONTE. I can easily do without your approbation.

ALCESTE. You must certainly, if you please, do without it.

ORONTE. I should like to see how you would set about composing some on the same subject.

ALCESTE. I might have the misfortune of making some as bad as yours, but I should take great care not to show them to anyone.

ORONTE. You speak to me very haughtily, and this conceit . . .

ALCESTE. Pray find others to flatter you, and do not ask me to do so.

ORONTE. But, my little sir, lower somewhat your lofty tone, if you please.

ALCESTE. I shall certainly, my big sir, do as I choose.

PHILINTE [*stepping between them*]. Nay, gentlemen, this is carrying the matter too far. I beg of you to cease.

ORONTE. Ah! I am wrong, I acknowledge it, and I leave the field to you. I am, sir, in all sincerity, your humble servant.

ALCESTE. And I, sir, your most obedient.

Scene III.

Philinte, Alceste

PHILINTE. There! you see that, with your love of sincerity, you have drawn a troublesome affair upon yourself. It was clear to me that Oronte, in order to be flattered . . .
ALCESTE. Do not speak to me.
PHILINTE. But . . .
ALCESTE. No more society for me.
PHILINTE. It is too much . . .
ALCESTE. Leave me alone.
PHILINTE. If I . . .
ALCESTE. Not another word.
PHILINTE. But how . . .
ALCESTE. I will hear no more.
PHILINTE. But yet . . .
ALCESTE. Again? what, again?
PHILINTE. You insult . . .
ALCESTE. 'Sdeath! this is too much. Do not follow me.
PHILINTE. You are joking; I shall not leave you.

ACT SECOND

Scene I.

Alceste, Célimène

ALCESTE. Madam, shall I be plain with you? I am far from being satisfied with your behavior; I feel very indignant with you because of it, and I am afraid that we shall have to part. Yes, it would be deceiving you, were I to speak otherwise; sooner or later a rupture will be unavoidable, and if I promised you the contrary a thousand times, it would not be in my power to prevent it.
CÉLIMÈNE. Oh! I see that it was in order to abuse me you wished to take me home?
ALCESTE. I do not abuse you. But you welcome too readily

the first new-comer; you allow too many lovers to beset you, and my heart sees it with pain.

CÉLIMÈNE. Do you blame me because others love me? Can I help being thought amiable? And when people come to see me and try to be pleasant, am I to take a stick to drive them away?

ALCESTE. No, madam, it is not a stick you want, but a heart less ready to listen to their love-tales. I know that your beauty accompanies you wherever you go; but your welcome keeps near you those your eyes have attracted; and the tender-heartedness you show to those you have conquered completes in every case the work begun by your charms. The too pleasant hope you give to your admirers increases their assiduities towards you, whereas a little reticence in your favors would soon drive the whole crowd away. At least, madam, tell me by what good fortune your Clitandre has the happiness of pleasing you so much. Upon what fund of merit and sublime virtue do you ground the honor of your esteem for him? Is it by the long nail * on his little finger that he has won your affectionate regard? Are you fascinated, along with the whole fashionable world, by the dazzling merit of his fair periwig? Is it to his large canions he owes your love for him? His great collection of ribbons have, perhaps, the power of charming you? Is it by the attraction of his large rhingrave † that he has gained your heart while calling himself your slave? Perhaps it is his way of laughing, or his falsetto voice, which has found out the secret of touching your heart?

CÉLIMÈNE. How unjustly you take umbrage at him. Do you not know why I humor him, and that he has promised to interest all his friends in your lawsuit?

ALCESTE. Eh! madam, lose my lawsuit with good courage, and do not encourage a rival who is hateful to me.

CÉLIMÈNE. But you are becoming jealous of everybody.

ALCESTE. Because everybody is kindly received by you.

CÉLIMÈNE. To see in me the same good-will for all, is the very thing which should calm your fearful spirit. You would

* A fashion of the time.
† Large breeches tied at the knees with ribbons—a German fashion.

have more reason to be offended, if you saw me entirely taken up with one.

ALCESTE. Yet I, whom you blame for too much jealousy, pray what have I more than any of them?

CÉLIMÈNE. The happiness of knowing that you are loved.

ALCESTE. And how can my yearning heart feel assured of it?

CÉLIMÈNE. I should think that as I have taken the trouble to tell you so, such a confession ought to satisfy you.

ALCESTE. But how shall I feel sure that you do not say as much to everybody else at the same time?

CÉLIMÈNE. Truly, a pretty speech for a lover! You make me out to be a nice person! Very well; to spare you any such suspicion, I retract at once all that I have said; and the possibility of being deceived, rests now with you alone. Are you satisfied?

ALCESTE. Alas! why do I love you so much? Oh! if ever I free my heart from this thraldom, I will bless Heaven for my rare good fortune! I do not wish to hide it from you; I do all I can to tear from my heart this terrible fondness, but my most strenuous efforts have failed hitherto. It is for my sins that I love you thus.

CÉLIMÈNE. It is true, your love for me is unparalleled.

ALCESTE. Yes, I can challenge the whole world. The depth of my love no one can conceive, and never, madam, has any man loved as I do.

CÉLIMÈNE. Quite so; your method is entirely new, for you love people only to quarrel with them; your passion breaks out only in unkind words, and never was there seen such a grumbling lover.

ALCESTE. But it depends entirely on you for his grumbling to cease. For pity's sake, let us cut short all these discussions, and let us deal openly with one another, and see if we can put a stop to . . .

Scene II.

Célimène, Alceste, Basque

CÉLIMÈNE. What is the matter?

BASQUE. Acaste is downstairs.

CÉLIMÈNE. Very well; tell him to come up.

Scene III.

Alceste, Célimène

ALCESTE. What! can I never have a moment of private conversation with you? Must you always be ready to receive company, and cannot you for once make up your mind to refuse your door?

CÉLIMÈNE. Do you wish me to quarrel with him?

ALCESTE. I cannot approve such affable manners.

CÉLIMÈNE. He is a man never to forgive me, if he knew that I could feel annoyed at his visits.

ALCESTE. And what is that to you, that you should inconvenience yourself in that fashion?

CÉLIMÈNE. Indeed! the good-will of men like him should be considered, for somehow he is one of those people who manage to be heard at Court. They mix in all conversations, and even if they can do you no good, they can do you harm. Whatever support one may have elsewhere, it would never do to make an enemy of such loud talkers.

ALCESTE. In short, whatever one may say or do, you still find reasons to bear with everyone; and the wisdom of your judgment . . .

Scene IV.

Alceste, Célimène, Basque

BASQUE. Clitandre is here also, madam.

ALCESTE. I expected as much. [*About to go.*

CÉLIMÈNE. Where are you running away to?

ALCESTE. I am going.

CÉLIMÈNE. Stay here.

ALCESTE. Why should I stay?

CÉLIMÈNE. Stay.

ALCESTE. I cannot.

CÉLIMÈNE. I wish it.

ALCESTE. No, no; these conversations only weary me, and you ask too much when you wish me to bear with them.

CÉLIMÈNE. I insist upon your staying.
ALCESTE. No, it is impossible.
CÉLIMÈNE. Very well, go, then; do just as you please.

Scene V.

Eliante, Philinte, Acaste, Clitandre, Alceste, Célimène, Basque

ELIANTE [*to Célimène*]. Here are the two marquises coming up with us. Have you been told of it?
CÉLIMÈNE [*to Basque*]. Chairs for everybody. [*Basque places chairs and exit.*] [*Aside to Alceste:*] What! you are not gone yet?
ALCESTE. No, but I am determined to force you to choose between them and me.
CÉLIMÈNE. Be quiet.
ALCESTE. You will explain yourself this very day.
CÉLIMÈNE. You are surely losing your senses.
ALCESTE. I am doing nothing of the kind; you shall declare yourself.
CÉLIMÈNE. Ah!
ALCESTE. You shall decide between them and me.
CÉLIMÈNE. You are laughing, I suppose.
ALCESTE. No, you shall make up your mind; my forbearance is at an end.
CLITANDRE. Egad! madam, I have just come from the Louvre, where Cléonte, at the levee, made himself supremely ridiculous. Has he no friend who could give him some charitable advice on his behavior?
CÉLIMÈNE. It is true that he sadly compromises his reputation; his manners everywhere at once strike us as odd; and when after a short absence we see him again, he seems even more absurd than before.
ACASTE. 'Gad! talking of absurd people, I have just had to bear with that most trying of tedious bores, the arguer Damon; if you will believe me, he kept me out of my sedan-chair in the broiling sun for a whole hour.
CÉLIMÈNE. He certainly is a strange talker, and knows how to make long speeches with no meaning in them. No one

understand a word of what he says; and in all that we hear, there is nothing but noise.

ÉLIANTE (*to* PHILINTE). This is no bad beginning, and the conversation is in a fair way against our neighbour.

CLITANDRE. Timante, madam, is another original.*

CÉLIMÈNE. He is a man all mystery from head to foot. In passing he casts upon one a bewildered glance, and with nothing to do is always busy. He makes a mystery of whatever he says, and he wearies one to death with his grimaces. In the midst of a general conversation he has always some secret to whisper, and that secret turns out to be nothing. He makes a wonder of the merest trifle, and even whispers you "good morning" mysteriously in your ear.

ACASTE. And Géralde, madam?

CÉLIMÈNE. Oh! the tedious boaster! You never see him come down from his noble pedestal. He is always mixing in the best society, and never quotes anyone less than duke, prince, or princess. Rank has turned his head, and all his talk is of horses, carriages, and dogs. He thou's people of the highest position, and the word "sir" is with him quite obsolete.

CLITANDRE. It is said that he is on the best terms with Bélise.

CÉLIMÈNE. Ah! the poor creature! and what dull company she is! I suffer martyrdom when she comes to see me. In vain do I tax my powers to the utmost to find out what to say to her; the barrenness of her talk destroys every attempt at conversation. It is useless to have recourse to the most commonplace topics to overcome her stupid silence; the fine weather, the rain, the cold and the heat are soon exhausted. Yet her visits, in themselves so unwelcome, drag their weary length along, and you may consult the clock and yawn twenty times, but she stirs no more than a log of wood.

ACASTE. And what do you think of Adraste?

CÉLIMÈNE. Ah! what intolerable pride! He is a man puffed up with self-conceit, always dissatisfied with the Court, and who makes it his business daily to inveigh against it. There is neither office, place, nor living given away, with-

* The Comte de Saint-Gilles, according to commentators.

out some injustice having been done to the important personage he fancies himself to be.

CLITANDRE. But young Cléon, who is visited by the best society, what do you say of him?

CÉLIMÈNE. That his cook has all the merit, and that it is to his table that each one pays respect.

ELIANTE. He takes care to provide the most dainty dishes.

CÉLIMÈNE. Yes, but I wish he would not provide himself; and I consider his stupid person a most unpleasant dish, which, to my mind, spoils the taste of all the others.

PHILINTE. His uncle, Damis, is greatly esteemed; what do you say of him, madam?

CÉLIMÈNE. He is one of my friends.

PHILINTE. He is a gentleman, and has plenty of good sense.

CÉLIMÈNE. Yes; only the display of cleverness he makes, vexes me beyond measure. He is always stiff and formal, and in all he says you can feel the effort he is making to utter some witticism. Since he has taken it into his head to think himself clever, he is so exacting that nothing can please his taste. He tries to see defects in all that is written; thinks that to bestow praise is not worthy of a man of intelligence; that it is a sign of knowledge to find fault with everything, the part of fools to admire and to laugh; and that in never approving the writings of our time he shows his superiority to other people. He even finds fault with ordinary conversations, and will not condescend to utter common things; but, his arms crossed on his breast, looks down with contempt from the height of his intellect on all that is said.

ACASTE. Demmit, madam, his very picture!

CLITANDRE. Your skill in drawing character is admirable, madam.

ALCESTE. Go on, go on, my dear courtly friends; no one is spared, and each will have his turn; yet, let any one of those people now appear, and we shall see you rush in haste to meet him, offer him your hand, and, with a flattering embrace, protest you are his sincere friend.

CLITANDRE. Why do you call us to account? If you object to what is said, you had better address your reproaches to this lady.

ALCESTE. No, upon my soul, no! It is you who deserve the blame; your fawning smiles draw from her these slanderous descriptions; her satirical turn of mind is constantly encouraged by the criminal incense of your flattery. She would find raillery less to her taste if she knew that it is not approved of. Thus it is that flatterers are always responsible for the vices spread among mankind.

PHILINTE. But why show such deep interest for those people? You would be the first to condemn in them the defects we find fault with.

CÉLIMÈNE. But must not our friend always show opposition? You surely would not have him think like everybody else, and must he not display everywhere the spirit of contradiction with which Heaven has blessed him? What others think never satisfies him; he is always of the opposite opinion, and he would fear to pass for a vulgar-minded man if he were observed to agree with anyone. The privilege of contradicting has such charms for him, that he is often in arms against himself; and to hear his own thoughts expressed by others, is sufficient to make him oppose them.

ALCESTE. The laughers are on your side, madam; that is everything, and you may freely indulge in your satirical mood against me.

PHILINTE. But you know also that you always fire up against anything that is said, and that through your avowed irritability of disposition you cannot bear to hear people either praised or blamed.

ALCESTE. 'Sdeath! It is because men are never in the right, and that anger against them is always reasonable; for in everything they prove themselves to be either unblushing flatterers or rash censors.

CÉLIMÈNE. But . . .

ALCESTE. No, madam, no; though I were to die for it, I must speak out. You have amusements which I cannot tolerate, and it is wrong of everyone here to encourage in you the great tendency you have to the defects which I blame.

CLITANDRE. As for myself, I do not know, but I openly declare that hitherto I have believed this lady to be faultless.

ACASTE. I see her endowed with beauty and attractions; but if she has any defects, I fail to see them.

ALCESTE. I see them all, and, far from affecting to be blind to her faults, she will tell you that I take great care to reproach her with them. The more devotedly we love, the less we ought to flatter. True love shows itself in not passing over anything; and, for my part, I would banish from my presence all those mean-spirited lovers so submissive to what I say or think, and whose tame obsequiousness panders to all my vagaries.

CÉLIMÈNE. In a word, according to you, when we are truly in love we ought to banish all tenderness, and to believe that the highest aim of perfect sympathy is to upbraid sharply those with whom we sympathize.

ELIANTE. This is not generally the way of love, and lovers ever extol the object of their choice. They can see nothing to blame, and everything becomes charming. They think faults perfections, and invent endearing terms by which to call them. She who is pale vies in fairness with the jessamine; the negress is an adorable brunette; a grace the lean and spare; she who is stout, has a bearing full of majesty; the slattern, with but few charms, passes for a careless beauty; the giantess becomes a goddess, and the dwarf an epitome of Heaven's wonders; the haughty beauty has a soul worthy of a diadem; deceitfulness passes for wit, and stupidity for good nature; the over-talkative is of a cheerful disposition, and she who is mute has retiring ways. Thus it is that a passionate lover cherishes even the defects of her he adores.

ALCESTE. And I maintain . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. Let us drop the subject, and go and take a turn or two in the gallery. What! are you going, gentlemen?

CLITANDRE, ACASTE [*together*]. No, madam.

ALCESTE. The fear of losing them greatly troubles you. Go when you please, gentlemen; but I warn you that I shall only leave after you are gone.

ACASTE. Unless my presence should prove importunate, nothing calls me elsewhere to-day.

CLITANDRE. As for me, provided I am in time for the *petit coucher,* I have no other engagement to call me away.

CÉLIMÈNE [*to Alceste*]. Surely, this is only a joke.

ALCESTE. Not so. We shall see if it is me you wish to send away.

Scene VI.

Alceste, Célimène, Eliante, Acaste, Philinte, Clitandre, Basque

BASQUE [*to Alceste*]. Sir, there is a man downstairs who wants to speak to you on business which cannot be put off.

ALCESTE. Tell him that I have no such urgent business.

BASQUE. He has a jacket on with large plaited skirts, all embroidered with gold.

CÉLIMÈNE [*to Alceste*]. Go and see who it is, or else make him come in.

Scene VII.

Alceste, Célimène, Eliante, Acaste, Philinte, Clitandre, a Guard of the Maréchaussée

ALCESTE [*going to meet the Guard*]. Well, what is it you want of me? Come in, sir.

GUARD. I want to speak a word or two privately with you.

ALCESTE. You can speak out loud, and tell me what it is that brings you here.

GUARD. The Marshals of France, with whose commands I am charged, hereby summon you to appear immediately before them, sir.

ALCESTE. Whom do you say? Me?

GUARD. Yourself.

ALCESTE. And what for?

PHILINTE [*to Alceste*]. It is this ridiculous affair of yours with Oronte.

CÉLIMÈNE [*to Philinte*]. What is it all about?

PHILINTE. Oronte and he got angry to-day with one another about some trifling verses he would not approve of, and the Marshals no doubt want to hush up the matter at once.

ALCESTE. I shall show no servile compliance.

PHILINTE. However, you must obey the summons; come, get ready.

ALCESTE. What possible understanding can we come to? Will the decree of these gentlemen oblige me to speak highly of the verses which are the cause of our quarrel? I cannot retract what I have said; I think them bad.

PHILINTE. But with a more conciliatory tone . . .

ALCESTE. I shall not yield; the verses are execrable.

PHILINTE. Try to show yourself a little more tractable. Come on.

ALCESTE. Unless an express command comes from the king for me to approve of the verses about which so much ado is made, by gad! I shall maintain that they are detestable, and that a man deserves to be hanged for having made them. [*To Clitandre and Acaste, who laugh.*] 'Sdeath! gentlemen, I did not think I was so amusing.

CÉLIMÈNE. Go quickly where you are wanted.

ALCESTE. I am going, madam, but I shall soon be back here to finish our discussion.

ACT THIRD

Scene I.

Clitandre, Acaste

CLITANDRE. My dear marquis, I see you beaming with satisfaction: you are amused at everything, and nothing seems to alarm you. Now, do you really and truly believe, without flattering yourself, that you have good reason to appear so joyful?

ACASTE. By Jove! I do not see, when looking at myself, that I have any reason to be sad. I am rich and young; I come of a family which can call itself noble with some appearance of truth; and I think that, thanks to the rank I hold from my ancestors, there are few positions for which I am not fit. As for courage, which we ought to value above all things, it is well known, without boasting on my part, that I am not wanting in that, and people have seen me carry on a certain affair of honor with vigor and determination enough. As for wit, I undoubtedly

possess some. I have also good natural taste, which enables me to judge and reason upon everything without study; to play the knowing critic upon the stage, when, to my delight, any new piece comes out; to give my opinion as a judge, and to set the whole house going at all the passages which deserve applause. I have tact, perfect manners, good looks, particularly fine teeth, and a very elegant figure. As to dress, few, I believe, would dispute the palm with me. I am esteemed as much as one can be; greatly beloved by the fair sex, and in favor with the king. Now, I do think that with all these advantages, my dear marquis, I do verily think that a man may well rest satisfied with himself in whatever country he may be.

CLITANDRE. Very true. But how is it that, finding conquests so easy elsewhere, you come here to utter fruitless sighs?

ACASTE. I utter fruitless sighs! Egad! I am neither of the mould nor disposition to endure the indifference of any woman. It is good for awkward and ordinary men to languish at the feet of inexorable beauties, and to bear with their indifference; to invoke the help of sighs and tears, and endeavor to obtain by much long-suffering what is refused to their scanty worth. But men of my stamp, marquis, are not made to love upon trust and to bear all the trouble. However great may be the merit of the fair sex, I fancy, thank Heaven! that we are worth our price; that to take pride in the possession of a heart like mine, it should of necessity cost them something; and that it is but just and proper that all advances should be mutual.

CLITANDRE. You believe, then, marquis, that your position here leaves nothing to be desired?

ACASTE. I have reason, marquis, to believe it to be so.

CLITANDRE. Trust me, marquis, bid farewell to such delusion. You flatter yourself, my dear friend, and blindly deceive yourself.

ACASTE. Quite right; I flatter and deceive myself.

CLITANDRE. But what can make you believe in such absolute success?

ACASTE. I flatter myself.

CLITANDRE. Upon what do you ground your belief?

ACASTE. I blindly deceive myself.

CLITANDRE. Have you any certain proofs?

ACASTE. I am altogether mistaken, I tell you.

CLITANDRE. Has Célimène made you any secret avowal of her preference for you?

ACASTE. No; I am very ill-used by her.

CLITANDRE. Answer me, I pray.

ACASTE. I meet with nothing but repulses.

CLITANDRE. Leave off your raillery. Tell me what hope she has given you.

ACASTE. I am the rejected lover, and you the fortunate one. She bears to my whole person the strongest aversion, and there is no doubt but that one of these days I shall have to hang myself.

CLITANDRE. Look here, marquis; will you be straightforward in this our love affair, and agree to one thing:—that if one of us two can show satisfactory proof that he has the larger share in Célimène's affections, the other will give up the field to the probable conqueror, and thereby rid him of an obstinate rival?

ACASTE. Egad! your proposal pleases me, and I agree to it with all my heart. But, hush!

Scene II.

Célimène, Acaste, Clitandre

CÉLIMÈNE. What! still here?

CLITANDRE. Love detains us, madam.

CÉLIMÈNE. I just heard a carriage coming; do you know who it is?

CLITANDRE. No.

Scene III.

Célimène, Acaste, Clitandre, Basque

BASQUE. Arsinoë, madam, is coming up to see you.

CÉLIMÈNE. What can the woman want with me?

BASQUE. Eliante is there also, talking with her.

CÉLIMÈNE. What has she taken into her head? What can possibly bring her here?

ACASTE. She is known for a perfect prude wherever she goes, and the ardor of her zeal . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. Yes, yes, all pure affectation. In her inmost soul she is as worldly as any of us, and all her anxiety is to hook somebody—not that she has any chance of success. She looks with envy at the lovers of others, and, seeing herself forsaken by all, she ever raves against the blindness of the age. She tries to hide behind the sham veil of the prude the frightful isolation of her heart and, to save the credit of her feeble charms, she condemns as criminal the power they do not possess. Yet a lover would greatly please the lady, and she has a certain weakness for Alceste. The addresses he pays me are an insult to her attractions, a robbery of which she is the victim; and her jealous vexation, which she can scarcely hide, vents itself anywhere and at any time by some underhand fling at me. Indeed, I never saw anything more stupid; she is rude to the last degree, and . .

Scene IV.

Arsinoë, Célimène, Clitandre, Acaste

CÉLIMÈNE. Ah, madam! what happy chance brings you here? I was getting sincerely anxious about you.

ARSINOË. I have come, prompted by duty, to give you some advice.

CÉLIMÈNE. Ah, how pleased I am to see you!

[*Exeunt Clitandre and Acaste, laughing.*

Scene V.

Arsinoë, Célimène

ARSINOË. Their departure could not be more opportune.

CÉLIMÈNE. Shall we sit down?

ARSINOË. No, it is not necessary. Friendship, madam, ought especially to show itself in those things which we consider of the greatest consequence to us; and as there are none of more importance than honor and reputation, I come to

prove my friendship to you by giving you a piece of advice which closely concerns your honor. I was yesterday visiting some virtuous and upright friends of mine, when the conversation turned, madam, upon you. I am sorry to say that your conduct, and the scandal it causes, was far from being approved of. That crowd of people whose visits you encourage; your gallantry, and the rumors to which it gives rise, found censors more numerous than should be, and more severe than I could have wished. You can easily imagine which part I took. I did all in my power to defend you. I vindicated your conduct on the plea of your good intentions, and made myself answerable for the honesty of your heart. But you know that there are in life certain things that we cannot excuse, however desirous we may be of doing so; and I was forced at last to acknowledge that the way in which you live does you harm; that it assumes a very suspicious look in the eyes of the world, and gives occasion to many an ill-natured story to be spread about; although you have but to wish it, for your conduct to give less hold to uncharitable tongues. Not that I could think for one moment that virtue has been outraged. Heaven preserve me from such a thought! But people too easily trust the appearances of guilt, and it is not sufficient for us to lead a blameless life if we neglect these appearances. I feel sure, madam, that you are too sensible not to take in good part this kindly-meant advice, and not to attribute it merely to the earnestness of an affection which makes me anxious for your welfare.

CÉLIMÈNE. Madam, I have many thanks to return to you, and such advice lays me under great obligation. Far from taking it unkindly, I am only too anxious at once to prove my gratitude by giving you on my part a certain piece of advice, which, wonderful to say, closely concerns your honor; and as I see you prove yourself my friend by informing me of the reports that people spread about me, I wish, in my turn, to follow so pleasing an example by acquainting you with what is said of you. In a certain house, where I was visiting the other day, I met with people of the most striking merit; and they, speaking of

the duties of a person who leads a virtuous life, turned the conversation, madam, upon you. There, your prudishness and the vehemence of your zeal were by no means quoted as a good example. That affectation of a grave demeanor; your everlasting speeches on discretion and honor; your simpering, and your outcries at the shadow of any impropriety which an innocent though ambiguous word may present; the high esteem in which you hold yourself, and the looks of pity you cast upon others; your frequent lectures and your sharp censures on things which are harmless and pure; all this, madam, if I may speak the plain truth, was blamed by common accord. "What signify," said they, "that modest mien and that grave manner, which are belied by all the rest? She is most exact at all her prayers, but she beats her servants and pays them no wages. She makes the greatest display of fervor in all places of worship, but she paints and wishes to appear beautiful. She has all nudities covered in her pictures, but she delights in the reality." For my part, I undertook your defence against everyone, and assured them it was all calumny; but the general opinion went against me, and the conclusion was that you would do well to be less solicitous about other people's actions and take more pains about your own; that we should examine ourselves a great deal before thinking of condemning others; that we ought to add the weight of an exemplary life to the corrections we pretend to make in our neighbors; and that, after all, it would be better still to leave that care to those who were ordained by Heaven for it. Madam, I believe that you also are too sensible not to take in good part this kindly-meant advice, and not to attribute it to the earnestness of an affection which makes me anxious for your welfare.

ARSINOË. Whatever we may be exposed to when we admonish another, I was not prepared, madam, for such a retort as this; and I can see, by the bitterness of your speech, that my sincere advice has hurt your feelings.

CÉLIMÈNE. On the contrary, madam, if the world were wise, it would bring these mutual counsels into fashion. Sincerity in such a course of action would help to destroy

that over-estimation of our own merit which we all have. It depends entirely on you, madam, for us two to continue this kindly office with equal zeal on both sides, and to take great care to repeat what we hear: you of me, I of you.

ARSINOË. Ah! madam, I can hear nothing to your disadvantage; it is only in me that there is so much to reprove.

CÉLIMÈNE. Madam, my belief is that we may praise or blame everything; and that everything is right according to age and taste. There is a time for gallantry, and a time for prudery. We may adopt the latter out of policy, when the glorious freshness of our youth has left us; it covers much vexatious neglect. I am not at all sure but that I shall follow your example some day. Age will bring about many changes; but it is not the time, madam, as you will acknowledge, to play the prude at twenty.

ARSINOË. You boast of a very trifling advantage, madam, and you proclaim your age very loudly. The difference there may be between yours and mine is not so very great for you to make so much of it, and I do not know why you give way to so passionate an outburst and abuse me so unmercifully.

CÉLIMÈNE. Neither do I know, madam, why you should everywhere show yourself so bitter against me. Why should you lay at my door all the vexations you may have? Am I responsible for the advances that are not made to you? If my presence inspires men with love, and if they persist in offering me every day attentions which your heart may desire for yourself, I have no power to prevent it, and it is really no fault of mine. You are perfectly at liberty, and I do not forbid you to have charms to attract them.

ARSINOË. Alas! and do you really think that I trouble myself much about the number of lovers you are so vain of; and that it is not very easy to judge what is the price paid nowadays to attract them? Do you wish to make people believe, with what we see going on, that your merit attracts all that crowd? that they are all inspired with a pure, honest love for you? and that it is to your virtues alone they pay their court? The world is no dupe, and is not blinded by idle pretences. It sees some women who are made to inspire

love, and who, nevertheless, retain no lovers about their persons; and it can draw its own inference. No! we do not make such conquests without great advances; none are satisfied with the beauty of our looks only, and we must dearly buy all the attentions paid to us. Do not pride yourself so much, therefore, upon the shallow advantage of a miserable victory, and think with less haughtiness of your own charms, instead of looking down upon others because of them. If we were envious of the conquests you make, I think we might do as much, be under no restraint, and show you easily that we have lovers whenever we wish for them.

CÉLIMÈNE. Have some by all means, madam, and let us see your success; endeavor by this excellent expedient to please, and without . . .

ARSINOË. Let us cease, madam, such a conversation; it would lead us too far. I should have left you before now had I not been forced to wait for my carriage.

CÉLIMÈNE. Pray, wait as long as you please, madam, there is no need for you to hurry away. But I will relieve you of my presence and give you more pleasant company. This gentleman, whom chance sends us so opportunely, will know better than I, how to entertain you.

Scene VI.

Alceste, Célimène, Arsinoë

CÉLIMÈNE. Alceste, I am obliged to go and write a letter or two which cannot be put off. Pray stop with this lady; I feel sure she will kindly excuse my incivility.

Scene VII.

Alceste, Arsinoë

ARSINOË. You see that according to her wish I am to entertain you till my carriage comes; and never could she have offered to me anything more pleasant than such a conversation. Yes, indeed, persons eminently endowed with merit command the love and esteem of everybody; and no doubt yours has some secret spell which attracts my heart and

makes me feel for you the greatest interest. I wish that the Court would render justice to your worth. You have a right to complain, and I am carried beyond myself when I see, as each day passes, that nothing is done for you.

ALCESTE. For me, madam? and on what grounds could I lay claim to anything? What services have I rendered to the State? Tell me what I have done, so worthy of praise, for me to complain that the Court does nothing for me?

ARSINOË. It is not everyone on whom it bestows its favor, who has rendered these signal services; opportunity as well as power is necessary, and in short the talents everyone sees in you should . . .

ALCESTE. No more about my talents, I beg of you! What would you have the Court encumber itself with? Its task would be no easy one, and its troubles would become strangely great, if it were to try and bring to light the merit of everyone.

ARSINOË. Transcendent merit will bring itself to light; yours is greatly valued in certain circles, and you ought to know that twice yesterday in my hearing you were much praised by people of high standing.

ALCESTE. Ha! madam, everybody is praised nowadays, and our age treats all alike. Every man has great merit thrust upon him. No, really, it is no longer an honor to be admired. We are crushed with praises; people throw them in our very face, and even my servant is put in the gazette.

ARSINOË. For my part, I wish that I could persuade you to look after some place at Court which would set off your worth before all men. Were you to give me the least sign, a great many influences could be set in motion to serve you, and I would soon find people ready to make the road easy for you.

ALCESTE. And what would you have me do at Court, madam? I am by disposition forced to avoid it. Heaven, in sending me into this world, did not give me a soul that could breathe in the atmosphere of such a spot. I do not feel in me the necessary qualities to make my fortune there. To tell the truth and be sincere are my chief talents. When speaking I cannot humor people in order to deceive them, and whoever has not the gift of hiding his thoughts ought to make

but a short stay in such places. If we do not belong to the Court, it is true that we lose the position and honorable titles which in our days it bestows; but at the same time, as a compensation for the loss of these advantages, we are not exposed to the grief of playing the part of silly personages. We have not to put up with many a cruel rebuff; to praise the verses of Mr. So-and-so; to flatter Lady Such-a-one; nor to bear with the follies of our hare-brained marquises.

ARSINOË. Let us leave this subject aside, since you will have it so, but I must say that my heart cannot help pitying you in your love, and, to tell you the truth, I sincerely wish that your affections could be better placed. You certainly deserve a better fate, for she whom you love is unworthy of you.

ALCESTE. But pray, madam, do you remember while you speak, that this person is your friend?

ARSINOË. Yes, I do; but my conscience has suffered too long from the wrong that is done to you. The position you are in is too painful for me to bear, and I cannot help telling you that your love is shamefully betrayed.

ALCESTE. You certainly show a great concern for me, madam, and such information is very precious to a lover.

ARSINOË. Yes, indeed, although my friend, she is, I grieve to say, unworthy of the love of a man of honor like you; for all the affection she shows is mere deceit.

ALCESTE. It may be so, madam; one cannot read people's hearts; but your charity might have dispensed with raising such suspicions in mine.

ARSINOË. If you do not wish to be undeceived, it is easy enough to say no more to you.

ALCESTE. Not so, madam. But on such a subject nothing is more unbearable than doubt, and I should prefer a plain statement which could be clearly proved.

ARSINOË. Very well, it is enough, and you shall be fully enlightened on the subject. Yes, you shall believe the testimony of your own eyes only. Pray accompany me to my house; there I will give you a palpable proof of the faithlessness of her you love; and if after that you can still think of another, perhaps we can offer you some consolation.

ACT FOURTH

Scene I.

Eliante, Philinte

PHILINTE. No, never was there a more unbending disposition, nor a reconciliation more difficult to bring about. In vain were all means tried to make Alceste alter his mind, nothing could make him change his first opinion, and never had so whimsical a quarrel, I believe, called forth all the discretion of those gentlemen.—" No, gentlemen," said he, " I cannot retract what I have said, and I am ready to agree to anything except to this. What is he so exasperated about, and what can he want of me? Is his glory at stake because he cannot write well? What need has he of my opinion which he has taken amiss? He may be a perfect gentleman, and yet write bad verses. Honor is in no way concerned in such matters; I think him an honorable man in every way; a man of noble birth, of merit and of courage, anything you please—but a very bad author notwithstanding. I will praise, if you wish me, his mode of living, his munificence, his skill in riding, fencing, and dancing; but as to praising his verses—I am his humble servant, and I repeat that when we cannot write better, we should avoid writing altogether, unless, indeed, we are condemned to it under pain of death." In short, the only conciliatory measure to which he at last yielded with extreme difficulty, was to say, greatly softening his tone as he thought, " Sir, I am sorry to be so difficult to please; and out of regard for you, I wish with all my heart that I had been able to think your sonnet better." Thereupon they quickly made them end the whole proceeding with an embrace.

ELIANTE. He certainly behaves very strangely at times, but I own that I hold him in great esteem, and the sincerity he glories in has in it something noble and heroic. It is a rare virtue in our days, and I could wish to see everybody possess it as he does.

PHILINTE. As for me, the more I know him the more astonished I am at the passion to which he is a slave. With such a dis-

position, I cannot understand that he should ever have taken into his head to love, and still less how your cousin should be the person of his choice.

ELIANTE. It shows that it is not always conformity of disposition which brings people together, and all those stories of love springing out of sympathy are belied by this example.

PHILINTE. But do you think, from what we can see, that he is loved in return here?

ELIANTE. This is a question not easily solved. How can one judge whether she really loves him? She hardly understands her own heart herself. At times she loves without being aware of it, and at others she believes she loves when really she feels nothing of the kind.

PHILINTE. I fear that our friend will meet with more sorrow than he imagines from this cousin of yours; and if he were of my mind he would place his affection elsewhere, and in making a better choice, answer to the kind feelings your heart shows for him.

ELIANTE. It is true; I do not try to disguise it, and I think that in these things we ought to be sincere. I see his love for another, but I do not try to oppose it; on the contrary, I feel a great interest in it for his sake; and did it depend entirely on me, I would unite him to the object of his love. But if something goes wrong, as it well may; if his love is to be thwarted by another lover, I can bring myself to accept Alceste's addresses, and shall feel no repugnance whatever to them because they have been discarded elsewhere.

PHILINTE. And I, madam, I also see your kind intentions towards him without wishing to oppose them; he could even tell you, if he wished, what advice I gave him on the subject. But if by a marriage which would unite them, you were prevented from receiving his attentions, all mine would tend to gain the favors you would so kindly bestow upon him—too happy if, when your heart has ceased to think of him, you can transfer your regard to me.

ELIANTE. You are laughing, Philinte?

PHILINTE. No, madam, I speak to you from my inmost heart. I keep watch for the time when I shall be able to make you an offer without reserve, and I eagerly look forward to that moment.

Scene II.

Alceste, Philinte, Eliante

ALCESTE. Ah, madam! avenge me for an offence which has triumphed over all my constancy.

ELIANTE. What is it? What can disturb you so much?

ALCESTE. I cannot think of it, it is death to me, and the overthrow of all creation would not crush me like this terrible blow. It is all over with me . . . my love . . . I cannot speak.

ELIANTE. Try to calm yourself a little; tell me . . .

ALCESTE. Ah, just Heaven! can the odious vices of the basest of minds be joined to such beauty?

ELIANTE. But pray, what can . . .

ALCESTE. Ah! all is over, I am . . . I am betrayed . . . I feel crushed; Célimène—would you believe it?—Célimène is faithless; Célimène has deceived me!

ELIANTE. Have you any just grounds for believing it?

PHILINTE. Perhaps you are too hasty in your suspicions, and your jealous temper sometimes gives rise to strange fancies . . .

ALCESTE. Ah! 'sdeath, sir! mind your own business. [*To Eliante:*] It is proof enough of her perfidy to have here in my possession a letter in her own handwriting; a letter to Oronte, which has put before my eyes in a moment my disgrace and her shame—Oronte, whose attentions I thought she avoided, and of all my rivals I feared the least.

PHILINTE. A letter may sometimes deceive, and not be so guilty as we may at first judge from appearances.

ALCESTE. Once more, sir, leave me alone, pray, and trouble yourself about your own affairs.

ELIANTE. You must moderate your sorrow, and the insult . . .

ALCESTE. Let this be your share, madam. To you I have now recourse; it is you alone who can comfort me in this my cruel sorrow. Avenge me on an ungrateful and deceitful relative, who basely betrays such constant love; avenge me for this injury, which must seem hateful to you.

ELIANTE. I avenge you! But how?

ALCESTE. By accepting my love. Take possession of my heart; it is only thus that I can revenge myself upon her. I shall punish her by making her a witness of my sincere attachment, of my profound love, of the respectful cares, earnest devotion, and constant attentions which my heart will henceforth offer to none but you.

ELIANTE. I sympathize deeply with you in your suffering, and I do not despise the love you offer me; still, the wrong may not be so great as you imagine, and you may wish to recall this desire for revenge. When the injury proceeds from one whom we really love, we indulge at first in many schemes which are soon forgotten. In vain do we see powerful reasons to break off the engagement; a guilty charmer is soon thought innocent, and all the harm we wished her, easily vanishes. Everyone knows what is the anger of a lover.

ALCESTE. No, no, madam, no! the offence is too great; I cannot relent, and I must part from her. Nothing could now change the resolution I have taken, and I should think myself base if ever I were to love her again. But she comes. My indignation increases at her approach. I will taunt her with her perversity, confound her with my words, and after that bring to you a heart free from her deceitful charms.

Scene III.

Célimène, Alceste

ALCESTE. O Heaven! may I control my just anger!

CÉLIMÈNE [*aside*]. Ah! [*To Alceste.*] What is this new trouble I see you in? what mean those deep sighs and those dark looks you cast upon me?

ALCESTE. That all the wickedness a soul is capable of can in nothing be compared to your perfidy; that fate, devils, and incensed Heaven never produced anything so worthless as yourself.

CÉLIMÈNE. These are pretty speeches, which I certainly admire.

ALCESTE. Ah! no more jesting; this is not a time for laughter. Rather let the blush of shame cover your face; you have cause, for your treachery is known. So the presentiments

of my heart were true; its alarms were but too well founded, and those frequent suspicions which were thought odious were true guides to what my eyes have now seen. Yes, in spite of all your skill in dissimulation, Heaven hinted to me what I had to fear. But do not think that I shall bear this insult unavenged. I know that it is not in our power to govern our inclinations; that love is always spontaneous; that we cannot enter a heart by force, and that every heart is free to name its conqueror. I would not complain, therefore, if you had from the first spoken to me without dissembling; for, although you would have crushed within me the very springs of my life, I should have blamed my fate alone for it. But to think that my love was encouraged by you! It is such a treacherous, such a perfidious action, that no punishment seems too great for it. After such an outrage, fear everything from me; I am no longer master of myself; anger has conquered me. Pierced to the heart by the cruel blow with which you kill me, my senses are not overswayed by reason; I yield myself up to a just revenge, and I cannot answer for what I may do.

CÉLIMÈNE. What can have called forth such an insult? Have you lost all sense and judgment? Pray speak!

ALCESTE. Yes, when on seeing you I drank in the poison which is killing me; yes, when like a fool I thought I had found some sincerity in those treacherous charms that have deceived me.

CÉLIMÈNE. Of what treachery are you complaining?

ALCESTE. Ah! false heart, how well you feign ignorance! But I will leave you no loophole of escape! Look at your own handwriting; this letter is sufficient to confound you; against such evidence you can have nothing to answer.

CÉLIMÈNE. So this is the cause of your strange outburst.

ALCESTE. And you do not blush at the sight?

CÉLIMÈNE. There is no occasion for me to blush.

ALCESTE. What! will you add audacity to your deceit? Will you disown this letter because it is not signed?

CÉLIMÈNE. Why should I disown it, when it is mine?

ALCESTE. And you can look at it without being ashamed of the crime of which it shows you to be guilty towards me?

CÉLIMÈNE. You are, in truth, a most foolish man.

ALCESTE. What! you face thus calmly this all-convincing proof? And the tenderness you show in it for Oronte, has it nothing that can outrage me or shame you?

CÉLIMÈNE. Oronte! who told you that this letter is for him?

ALCESTE. Those who, to-day, put it in my hands. But suppose I grant that it is for another, have I less cause to complain? and would you be, in fact, less guilty towards me?

CÉLIMÈNE. But if the letter was written to a woman, in what can it hurt you, and what guilt is there in it?

ALCESTE. Ah! the evasion is excellent, and the excuse admirable! I must acknowledge that I did not expect such deceit, and I am now altogether convinced. What! do you dare to have recourse to such base tricks? Do you think people entirely devoid of understanding? Show me a little in what way you can maintain such a palpable falsehood, and how you can apply to a woman all the words which in this letter convey so much tenderness. In order to cover your infidelity, reconcile if you can what I am going to read to . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. No, I will not. What right have you to assume such authority, and to dare to tell me such things to my face?

ALCESTE. No, no, instead of giving way to anger, try to explain to me the expressions you use here.

CÉLIMÈNE. I shall do nothing of the kind, and what you think on the subject matters very little to me.

ALCESTE. For pity's sake, show me, and I shall be satisfied, that this letter can be explained to be meant for a woman.

CÉLIMÈNE. It is for Oronte; there! and I will have you believe it. I receive all his attentions gladly. I admire what he says; I like his person, and I admit whatever you please. Do as you like, take your own course, let nothing stop you, and annoy me no more.

ALCESTE [*aside*]. O heavens! can anything more cruel be invented; and was ever a heart treated in such a manner? What! I am justly incensed against her, I come to complain, and I must bear the blame! She excites my grief and my suspicion to the utmost. She wishes me to believe everything, she boasts of everything; and yet my heart is cowardly enough not to break the bonds that bind it, cow-

ardly enough not to arm itself with deserved contempt for the cruel one it, alas! loves too much. [*To Célimène.*] Ah! faithless woman, you well know how to take advantage of my weakness, and to make the deep yearning love I have for you serve your own ends. Clear yourself at least of a crime which overwhelms me with grief, and cease to affect to be guilty towards me. Show me, if you can, that this letter is innocent; strive to appear faithful to me, and I will strive to believe you.

CÉLIMÈNE. Believe me, you forget yourself in your jealous fits, and you do not deserve all the love I feel for you. I should like to know what could compel me to condescend to the baseness of dissembling with you; and why, if my heart were engaged to another, I should not frankly tell you so. What! does not the kind assurance of my feelings towards you, plead my defence against all your suspicions? Have they any weight before such a pledge? Do you not insult me when you give way to them? And since it requires so great an effort for us to speak our love; since the honor of our sex, that enemy to love, so strictly forbids such a confession, should the lover who sees us for his sake conquer such obstacles, think lightly of that testimony, and go unpunished? Is he not to blame if he does not trust what we have confessed with so much reluctance? Indeed, my indignation should be the reward of such doubts, and you do not deserve that I should care for you. I am very foolish, and am vexed at my own folly for still retaining any goodwill towards you. I ought to place my affections elsewhere, and thus give you just excuse for complaint.

ALCESTE. Ah, faithless woman! How wonderful is my weakness for you! You deceive me, no doubt, with such endearing words. But let it be; I must submit to my destiny; I give myself heart and soul to you. I trust you. I will to the end see what your heart will prove to be, and if it can be cruel enough to deceive me.

CÉLIMÈNE. No; you do not love me as you ought to love.

ALCESTE. Ah! nothing can be compared with my exceeding great love; and in my anxiety to make the whole world a witness to it, I even go so far as to form wishes against you. Yes, I could wish that no one thought you charming; that

you were reduced to a humbler lot; that Heaven, at your birth, had bestowed nothing upon you; that you had neither rank, high birth, nor wealth, so that my heart in offering itself, might make up for the injustice of such a fate, and that I might have both the happiness and the glory on that day of seeing you owe everything to my love.

CÉLIMÈNE. This is wishing me well after a strange sort. May Heaven spare me from your ever having an opportunity . . . But here comes Mr. Dubois in strange attire.

Scene IV.

Célimène, Alceste, Dubois

ALCESTE. What means this costume, and your frightened look? What is the matter with you?

DUBOIS. Sir . . .

ALCESTE. Well?

DUBOIS. We have seen strange things to-day.

ALCESTE. What do you mean?

DUBOIS. Our affairs, sir, are in a bad way.

ALCESTE. What?

DUBOIS. Shall I speak out?

ALCESTE. Yes; and quickly.

DUBOIS. Is there nobody here?

ALCESTE. Ah! What trifling! Will you speak?

DUBOIS. Sir, we must march off.

ALCESTE. What do you say?

DUBOIS. We must decamp without beat of drum.

ALCESTE. But why?

DUBOIS. I tell you that we must leave this place.

ALCESTE. The reason?

DUBOIS. We must go, sir; without taking leave.

ALCESTE. But what is the meaning of all this rubbish?

DUBOIS. The meaning is, sir, that we must pack and be off.

ALCESTE. Ah! I shall certainly break your head for you, rascal, if you are not quick in explaining yourself.

DUBOIS. Sir, a man with black coat and looks came right into the kitchen to leave with us a paper all scribbled over in such a fashion, that one need be more cunning than a demon

to make it out. It is about your lawsuit, I feel sure; but even Beelzebub could not make out a word of it.

ALCESTE. Well! and what has the paper to do with the going away you come here to speak of, you rascal?

DUBOIS. I must tell you, sir, that about an hour afterwards, a gentleman who often comes to see you, came to ask for you all in a kind of tremor, and not finding you at home, he told me softly—for he knows that I am a very faithful servant to you, sir—to let you know . . . Wait a moment; what can possibly be his name?

ALCESTE. Never mind his name, you stupid fellow, and tell me what he said.

DUBOIS. In short, he is one of your friends, and that is sufficient. He told me that you must go away from here for your very life, and that you are threatened with being arrested.

ALCESTE. What! Did he not tell you anything more definite?

DUBOIS. No. He asked me for some paper and ink, and wrote a line or two which may let you into the depths of this mystery.

ALCESTE. Give it me, then.

CÉLIMÈNE. What can all this mean?

ALCESTE. I really don't know; but I should like to have it explained to me. [*To Dubois.*] Will you soon have done, you scoundrel?

DUBOIS [*after having fumbled about for the note*]. Faith, sir, I must have left it on your table.

ALCESTE. I do not know what keeps me from . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. Do not get angry; but go and try to unravel all this.

ALCESTE. It seems that whatever I may do, fate has sworn to prevent me from having any conversation with you. But to triumph over it, allow me in my ardent love to see you once more before the day is ended.

ACT FIFTH

Scene I.

Alceste, Philinte

ALCESTE. It is of no use; my resolution is taken.

PHILINTE. But, however terrible this blow may be to you, must it force you to . . .

ALCESTE. No, you labor in vain, and in vain try to argue. Nothing can now deter me from my project; too much perversity reigns in our age, and I am resolved to avoid in future all intercourse with men. What! everyone sees that honor, probity, decency, and the laws are all against my adversary, men publish the justice of my cause, and my mind trusts to the certainty of my right! Yet in the end I am defeated! I have justice on my side, and I lose my cause! A miserable scoundrel, whose shameful history everyone knows, comes off triumphantly, thanks to the blackest falsehood! All good faith yields to his perfidy! He cuts my throat and proves that he is right. The weight of his mean, hypocritical grimace is thrown into the balance, and justice kicks the beam. He gets a decree of court to crown his infamy; and not satisfied with the injury done to me, as there circulates in the world an abominable book, the mere reading of which would be blamable, and which deserves the strictest suppression, the paltry scoundrel has the impudence to proclaim me the author! * Upon which Oronte is seen to mutter, and basely endeavors to support the calumny! Oronte, who is said at Court to be an honorable man, and to whom I have done no other wrong than to have told him the honest truth. Oronte, who comes to me in spite of myself, eagerly to ask my opinion on verses of his making; and because I speak to him frankly, and betray neither him nor the truth, he helps to crush me with an imaginary crime! He becomes my greatest enemy, and will never forgive me, because, forsooth! I could not find his sonnet good. 'Sdeath!

* The first three Acts of "Le Tartuffe" had been acted before the Court, and had exasperated the enemies of Molière; they had recourse to the most unworthy means to try and stop it. They accused Molière of being the author of an infamous libel then circulating in Paris.

and men are made thus! It is to such actions that glory leads them! This is the good faith, virtuous zeal, justice, and honor we find among them! No, it is too much to endure all the sorrows their malice can devise against us; I will escape out of this wood, out of this cut-throat place; and since men behave like wolves to each other, the traitors shall never have me among them so long as I am alive.

PHILINTE. I still think that you are rather hasty in your decision, and the harm is not so great as you make out. What your adversary dares to impute to you has not been credited sufficiently for you to be arrested. His false report is falling of itself; and it is an action which well may turn against him.

ALCESTE. Turn against him! He does not fear the odium attached to such practices; he has a license to be an open villain, and far from injuring his position, the event will only put him to-morrow on a more solid footing than ever.

PHILINTE. Anyhow, it is evident that little attention has been paid to the report his malice spread against you; you have nothing to fear on that head, and as for your lawsuit, of which you have a right to complain, it will be easy for you to appeal against the judgment.

ALCESTE. No, I will abide by it. However great the injury that such a verdict may do me, I will take good care it is not reversed. We see too plainly how right is abused, and I wish it to go down to posterity as a most striking sign of the times, and as an unmistakable proof of the wickedness of the men of our days. It is true that it may cost me some twenty thousand francs; but for twenty thousand francs I shall have the right to protest against the iniquity of mankind, and to nourish for it an undying hatred.

PHILINTE. But in short . . .

ALCESTE. But in short, your trouble is thrown away. What can you say to me on that head? Will you have the boldness to excuse before me the atrocious shame of all that is happening?

PHILINTE. No, I agree to all you please; everything goes on by intrigue and self-interest. It is cabal and cunning which carry the day, and men should act differently. But is their want of equity a sufficient reason for you to withdraw from

their society? All these human failings give us opportunities of exercising our philosophy. It is the noblest use we can make of virtue: and if probity reigned everywhere; if all hearts were open, just, and tractable, most of our virtues would be useless to us: for we employ them to bear as well as we can with the injustice of others in our righteous cause; as it is for a true and virtuous heart to . . .

ALCESTE. I know that you speak wonderfully well, and that you are never wanting in fine reasoning; but you are wasting your time and all your noble speeches. Reason tells me that it is for my own good that I should retire. I have not power enough over my tongue, I could not answer for what I might say, and I should bring a thousand troubles upon my own head. Leave me here without any more words, to wait for Célimène. She will have to consent to the project which I have determined upon. I must, in short, see whether or not her heart feels any love for me, and I must now forever be convinced of it.

PHILINTE. Let us go up to Eliante and wait for her there.

ALCESTE. No, my mind is too much agitated; go and see her yourself, and leave me, I beg of you, in this dark corner alone with my gloomy sorrow.

PHILINTE. Strange company to help one to wait. I will ask Eliante to come down. [*Exit.*

Scene II.

Célimène, Oronte, Alceste

ORONTE. Yes, madam, you are to consider whether by ties so sweet I am to be forever yours. I must have a decided answer as to your feelings for me. A lover cannot tolerate any ambiguity on such a point. If my ardent affection has really touched your heart, you ought not to hesitate to tell me so; and after all, the proof I ask from you is only the wish that Alceste should, henceforth, no more pretend to your hand, that you should entirely give him up, and, in short, forbid him your house forever.

CÉLIMÈNE. But what can make you so angry with him? you whom I have heard speak so highly of him?

ORONTE. Madam, there is no need of these explanations; I only wish to know what your feelings are. Choose the one or the other; I am only waiting for your decision.

ALCESTE [*stepping forth*]. Yes, this gentleman is right, madam, and you must choose; and his request entirely agrees with mine. The same impatience urges me, and the same anxiety brings me here. My love desires to receive from you an undoubted proof; the matter can be delayed no longer; the time has come for you to explain your feelings.

ORONTE. I have no wish, sir, that an importunate love should in any way interfere with your good fortune.

ALCESTE. Sir, I do not wish, jealous or not jealous, to share her heart in anything with you.

ORONTE. If she can prefer your love to mine . . .

ALCESTE. If she possibly can have the least inclination for you . . .

ORONTE. I swear to pretend no more to her.

ALCESTE. And I emphatically swear no more to set eyes upon her.

ORONTE. Madam, it remains with you to speak without hesitation.

ALCESTE. Madam, you can explain yourself without fear.

ORONTE. You have only to say which way your preference inclines.

ALCESTE. You have nothing to do but to cut matters short and to choose between us.

ORONTE. What! you seem to find such a choice difficult!

ALCESTE. What! you hesitate and appear undecided!

CÉLIMÈNE. Gracious heavens! how importunate this persistence is, and how unreasonable you both are; my mind is made up, and my heart does not waver; it does not hesitate between you. Nothing is more easily decided than the choice love makes. But I feel great repugnance to make a declaration of this kind before you both. I think that disobliging words should not be spoken in the presence of witnesses, that our heart gives enough tokens of its inclination without our being forced to an open quarrel with everyone, and that, in short, a lover should be given more gentle evidence of the ill-success of his attentions.

ORONTE. Not so, not so; I fear nothing from a frank avowal; on the contrary, as far as I am concerned, I wish for it.

ALCESTE. And I demand it. It is an open declaration that I especially claim. I will not have any half measures. Your great study is how you can keep friends with everybody. But let us have no trifling, no more uncertainty; you must explain yourself openly, or else I shall take your refusal itself for a decision. I shall know, for my part, how to interpret your silence, and by it I shall understand the worst.

ORONTE. I am obliged to you, sir, for this anger, and I repeat all that you have said.

CÉLIMÈNE. How you weary me with this caprice! Is there any common justice in what you ask of me? Have I not told you what motive restrains me . . . ? But Eliante is coming; she shall judge.

Scene III.

Eliante, Philinte, Célimène, Oronte, Alceste

CÉLIMÈNE. You see me here, cousin, persecuted by people who seem to have arranged their plans beforehand. Both, with the same peremptoriness, ask that I should declare the choice my heart has made; and that by a decision to be pronounced before them, I should forbid one of the two to continue his attentions. Tell me if such things are ever done?

ELIANTE. Do not consult me upon such a matter; you may address yourself to the wrong person, and I am decidedly for those who speak their mind openly.

ORONTE. Madam, it is in vain for you to excuse yourself.

ALCESTE. All your evasions will be but ill seconded here.

ORONTE. You must speak and decide.

ALCESTE. You need only continue to be silent.

ORONTE. One word will be sufficient.

ALCESTE. And I understand you even if you do not speak at all.

Scene IV.

Arsinoë, Célimène, Eliante, Acaste, Philinte, Clitandre, Oronte

ACASTE [*to Célimène*]. Madam, we come, with your permission, to try and clear up a certain trifling matter.

CLITANDRE [*to Oronte and Alceste*]. You are right welcome here, gentlemen, for you also are concerned in this business.

ARSINOË [*to Célimène*]. You are no doubt surprised, madam, to see me here, but these gentlemen are the cause of my presence. They both came to see me, and both complained of a want of faith which I cannot believe you to be guilty of. I have too high an opinion of you; my eyes even refused to be convinced by the strongest proofs they showed me; and in my friendship, forgetful of the little misunderstanding we have had, I readily complied with their wish to come here with them, in order to see you clear yourself from such calumny.

ACASTE. Yes, madam, let us see with all due calmness how you will manage to explain the matter. This letter was written by you to Clitandre.

CLITANDRE. And you wrote this affectionate note to Acaste.

ACASTE [*to Oronte and Alceste*]. Gentlemen, this writing cannot be altogether unknown to you. I greatly fear, on the contrary, that her kindness has only too well acquainted you with her handwriting; still this is worth reading.

Acaste reads

"You are a strange man to reprove my playfulness, and to reproach me with never being so merry as when I am not with you. There is nothing more unjust, and if you do not come at once and ask my pardon for this offence, I will never forgive you as long as I live. Our big gawky of a viscount"—he should have been here—"Our big gawky of a viscount, with whom you begin your complaints, is a man who could never please me; and since the day that I watched him spitting in a well for full three-quarters of an hour, to make circles in the water, I have never been able

to have a good opinion of him. As for the little marquis "—myself, gentlemen, let it be said without vanity—" As for the little marquis who held my hand so long yesterday, I think there is nothing so trivial as his whole person, and he is one of those men who have no other merit than what their tailor brings them. As for the man with the green ribbons "—[*to Alceste*] your turn now, sir—" As for the man with the green ribbons, he amuses me sometimes with his bluntness and his irascible peevishness, but there are a thousand occasions when I think him the greatest bore in the world. As for the sonnet-maker "—[*to Oronte*] now for your share, sir—" As for the sonnet-maker, who wants to pass for a clever wit, and will be an author in spite of everybody, I cannot even take the trouble of listening to what he says, and his prose is to me as bad as his verse. Understand, therefore, that I am not always as much entertained as you imagine; that I miss you more than I should care to say in all the entertainments to which I am forced to go, and that there is nothing like the society of those we love to enhance all kind of pleasure."

CLITANDRE. Now it's my turn [*reads*]: "Your Clitandre of whom you talk to me, and who affects such sweet manners, is the last man for whom I could feel any friendship. He is absurd enough to fancy that I love him, and you yourself are absurd to think that I do not love you. If you wish to be right, change feelings with him and come and see me as often as you possibly can, to lighten for me the misery of being persecuted by his presence." We see here the model of a fine character, madam; you know, no doubt, what name it deserves. It is enough; we shall both of us go and publish everywhere this noble picture of your heart. [*Exit.*

ACASTE. I too could say something worth hearing, but I do not hold you worthy of my anger, and I will show you that little marquises can comfort themselves with nobler hearts than yours. [*Exit.*

Scene V.

Célimène, Eliante, Arsinoë, Alceste, Oronte, Philinte

ORONTE. What! am I to be treated in such a fashion after all you have written to me? and does your heart, with all the semblance of love, promise itself by turns to all mankind? I have been your dupe too long, and I will be so no longer. You render me an immense service in making me know you as you really are. All the affection I had bestowed upon you, comes back to me, and I find my revenge in knowing what you lose. [*To Alceste.*] Sir, I no longer oppose your suit, and you are welcome to conclude matters with this lady.

Scene VI.

Célimène, Eliante, Arsinoë, Alceste, Philinte

ARSINOË [*to Célimène*]. This is certainly, madam, the basest action that I have ever heard of; I can be silent no longer, so grieved do I feel. Did ever anybody hear of such conduct? I do not enter into the feelings of the others, but that this gentleman [*pointing to Alceste*], who had staked his whole happiness upon you—a man of merit and honor, who worshipped you with idolatry—should be . . .

ALCESTE. Ah! madam, leave to me, I pray, the management of my own business, and do not load yourself with superfluous cares. It is in vain that I see you take up my quarrel, my heart would not reward you for your disinterested zeal; and if I could think of avenging myself by another choice, you are not the person I should select.

ARSINOË. Do you indeed, sir, fancy that I can have such a thought, and that I can be so desperately eager to secure you? That you have entertained such a thought argues, I fear, that you have no small opinion of yourself. The refuse of Célimène is a merchandise I should be wrong to prize. Pray be undeceived, and do not carry things with so high a hand. People like me are not for such as you; you will do right to sigh for her still, and I long to see so charming a match concluded. [*Exit.*

Scene VII.

Célimène, Eliante, Alceste, Philinte

ALCESTE [*to Célimène*]. Well, I have heard them all, and, in spite of what I see, I have kept silent; have I had command over myself long enough, and may I now . . . ?

CÉLIMÈNE. Yes, you may say all you like; you have a right to complain and to reproach me with anything you please. I confess myself in the wrong, and in my confusion I have no wish to look for vain excuses. I have despised the anger of the others, but I acknowledge my faithlessness towards you; your resentment is just. I know how guilty I must seem to you, and that everything must seem to prove my fickleness; in short, that you have cause to hate me. Do so, I submit.

ALCESTE. Can I cease to love you? Can I thus forget all my tenderness for you? I wish to hate you, but my heart refuses to obey. [*To Eliante and Philinte.*] See to what an unworthy love can lead; be both of you witnesses of my infatuation. But this is not all, you will see me carry my weakness yet further; I will show you how wrongly we are called wise, and how in all hearts there still remains something of the man. [*To Célimène.*] Yes, faithless woman, I willingly forgive you all my wrongs; I will find in my own heart an excuse for all your actions, and will lay the blame on the manners of the age, provided, however, that you agree to the resolution I have taken. It is this: you will henceforth shun all intercourse with mankind, and will follow me without delay into the solitude where I have vowed to live. It is only thus that you can redeem in the world's opinion the mischief your letters have done, and only thus that, after the scandal which a noble mind must abhor, my heart will still be able to love you.

CÉLIMÈNE. What! renounce the world before I grow old, go and bury myself in the wilderness . . .

ALCESTE. But if your love answers to mine, what can be to you all the rest of the world; are not all your desires centred in me?

CÉLIMÈNE. Solitude at twenty years of age frightens me. I do not find in my heart greatness and self-denial enough to yield to such a fate; if the gift of my hand can satisfy your wishes, I am willing; and marriage . . .

ALCESTE. No. Now my heart loathes you, and my love is at an end; since you cannot in me find your all in all as I do in you, go, I reject you: this unworthy insult forever delivers my soul from the thraldom of my love.

[*Exit Célimène.*

Scene VIII.

Eliante, Alceste, Philinte

ALCESTE [*to Eliante*]. Your beauty, madam, is adorned by a thousand virtues, and it is only in you that I have seen sincerity and truth. I have for a long time set the highest value on you, but allow me thus only to esteem you forever. My heart is afflicted by too many sorrows for me to dare to ask you to share my lot. I feel too unworthy of you, and I begin to understand that Heaven has not formed me for such happiness; that it would be doing you an unworthy homage to offer you a heart refused by another; in short . . .

ELIANTE. Do not make yourself anxious, I shall find no difficulty in bestowing my hand, and here is your friend who will not want pressing in order to accept it.

PHILINTE. Ah! madam, that honor is my only ambition, and I could sacrifice for it my soul, my life.

ALCESTE. May you always experience the same feelings for each other, and be forever happy! As to myself, betrayed on all sides, and crushed with injustice, I will escape from a gulf where vice triumphs, and look in all the earth for a desert place where one may be free to be a man of honor. [*Exit.*

PHILINTE. Come, come, madam, let us exhaust every means to prevent him from putting his wild scheme into execution.

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THE FALL OF PHAETON.

Dolce's Italian translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses was printed in Venice by Gabriel Giolito in 1553. According to Ovid, Phaeton, the son of Helios, after obtaining permission to drive the horses of the Sun, left his course, and was flung into the river Eridanus. His sisters, who had yoked the steeds, were turned into poplars. The incident is represented with amazing skill and picturesqueness in the present miniature.

Vedi, che fuma l'uno e l'altro polo;
E ſe non ſpegni homai le fiamme tante,
Queſte la ſuſo prenderanno il uolo,
Ond'arſe caderan le caſe ſante.
Gia pien di graue e intolerabil duolo
A pena puote ſoſtenere Atlante
L'Aſſo, gia tutto feruido e cocente;
Come in fornace ferro, o lama ardente.

Infin giuſto Signor conchiudo e dico;
Che ſe mar, terra, e cielo a perir'hanno;
Di nuouo nel confuſo Chaos antico
Tutte le belle coſe torneranno.
Sij dunque padre al proprio bene amico;
E ceſſa tanto irreparabil danno.
Coſi diſſe la Terra: e aſcoſe poi
L'arſiccio uolto in grembo a gliantri ſuoi.

Gioue a tutti li Dei ſe chiaro e piano
(E trouoſſi preſente Apollo ancora;
Che conceſſe al fanciul ſemplice e uano
Quel, ch'aſſai meglio hauer negato fora)
Che, ſe non ui rimedia la ſua mano;
Perirebbe ogni coſa in picciol hora.
Ma gia mi par d'eſſer traſcorſo tanto,
C'honeſto fia, ch'io mi riposi alquanto.

CANTO QVARTO.

OLTI GIA furo, e a noſtra eta = de ancora,
MAGNA= nimo Signor ſono Fe= = tonti;
Ch'ardiſcon di poggiare adhora adhora
Deboli e infermi i piu ſublimi Monti:
Onde auuien poi, che'n picciola dimora,
Qual giu trabocchi, e qual ſciancato ſmonti:
E con uergogna ſempiterna e danno
Riſo e giuoco infinito a ſaui danno.

Alcun penſa aguagliar gliantichi honori
Di quei, che gia cantar Turno & Vliſſe;
O tor le palme e i piu pregiati Allori
A chi di Bice, e a chi di Laura ſcriſſe:
Altri auanzar ne i Martial furori
Chi piu ſaggio e famoſo in terra uiſſe:
E queſto Bauio, ouer Calmeta, e quello
Riman Therſite, o'l picciolo Brunello.

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PHÆDRA

—

BY

JEAN-BAPTISTE RACINE

[*Metrical Translation by Robert Bruce Boswell*]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THESEUS, Son of Ægeus and King of Athens.

PHÆDRA, Wife of Theseus and Daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë.

HIPPOLYTUS, Son of Theseus and Antiope, Queen of the Amazons.

ARICIA, Princess of the Blood Royal of Athens.

ŒNONE, Nurse of Phædra.

THERAMENES, Tutor of Hippolytus.

ISMENE, bosom friend of Aricia.

PANOPE, Waiting-woman of Phædra.

Guards.

The scene is laid at Trœzen, a town of the Peloponnesus.

PHÆDRA

ACT FIRST

Scene I.

Hippolytus, Theramenes.

HIPPOLYTUS.—My mind is settled, dear Theramenes,
And I can stay no more in lovely Trœzen.
In doubt that racks my soul with mortal anguish,
I grow ashamed of such long idleness.
Six months and more my father has been gone,
And what may have befallen one so dear
I know not, nor what corner of the earth
Hides him.

THERAMENES.— And where, prince, will you look for him?
Already, to content your just alarm,
Have I not cross'd the seas on either side
Of Corinth, ask'd if aught were known of Theseus
Where Acheron is lost among the Shades,
Visited Elis, doubled Tœnarus,
And sail'd into the sea that saw the fall
Of Icarus? Inspired with what new hope,
Under what favor'd skies think you to trace
His footsteps? Who knows if the King, your father,
Wishes the secret of his absence known?
Perchance, while we are trembling for his life,
The hero calmly plots some fresh intrigue,
And only waits till the deluded fair—

HIPPOLYTUS.—Cease, dear Theramenes, respect the name
Of Theseus. Youthful errors have been left
Behind, and no unworthy obstacle
Detains him. Phædra long has fix'd a heart
Inconstant once, nor need she fear a rival.

In seeking him I shall but do my duty,
And leave a place I dare no longer see.

THERAMENES.—Indeed! When, prince, did you begin to dread
These peaceful haunts, so dear to happy childhood,
Where I have seen you oft prefer to stay,
Rather than meet the tumult and the pomp
Of Athens and the court? What danger shun you,
Or shall I say what grief?

HIPPOLYTUS.— That happy time
Is gone, and all is changed, since to these shores
The gods sent Phædra.

THERAMENES.— I perceive the cause
Of your distress. It is the queen whose sight
Offends you. With a step-dame's spite she schemed
Your exile soon as she set eyes on you.
But if her hatred is not wholly vanish'd,
It has at least taken a milder aspect.
Besides, what danger can a dying woman,
One too who longs for death, bring on your head?
Can Phædra, sick'ning of a dire disease
Of which she will not speak, weary of life
And of herself, form any plots against you?

HIPPOLYTUS.—It is not her vain enmity I fear:
Another foe alarms Hippolytus.
I fly, it must be own'd, from young Aricia,
The sole survivor of an impious race.

THERAMENES.—What! You become her persecutor too!
The gentle sister of the cruel sons
Of Pallas shared not in their perfidy;
Why should you hate such charming innocence?

HIPPOLYTUS.—I should not need to fly, if it were hatred.

THERAMENES.—May I then learn the meaning of your flight?
Is this the proud Hippolytus I see,
Than whom there breathed no fiercer foe to love
And to that yoke which Theseus has so oft
Endured? And can it be that Venus, scorn'd
So long, will justify your sire at last?
Has she, then, setting you with other mortals,
Forced e'en Hippolytus to offer incense
Before her? Can you love?

HIPPOLYTUS.— Friend, ask me not.
You, who have known my heart from infancy
And all its feelings of disdainful pride,
Spare me the shame of disavowing all
That I profess'd. Born of an Amazon,
The wildness that you wonder at I suck'd
With mother's milk. When come to riper age,
Reason approved what Nature had implanted.
Sincerely bound to me by zealous service,
You told me then the story of my sire,
And know how oft, attentive to your voice,
I kindled when I heard his noble acts,
As you described him bringing consolation
To mortals for the absence of Alcides,
The highways clear'd of monsters and of robbers,
Procrustes, Cercyon, Sciro, Sinnis slain,
The Epidaurian giant's bones dispersed,
Crete reeking with the blood of Minotaur.
But when you told me of less glorious deeds,
Troth plighted here and there and everywhere,
Young Helen stolen from her home at Sparta,
And Peribœa's tears in Salamis,
With many another trusting heart deceived
Whose very names have 'scaped his memory,
Forsaken Ariadne to the rocks
Complaining last, this Phædra, bound to him
By better ties—you know with what regret
I heard and urged you to cut short the tale,
Happy had I been able to erase
From my remembrance that unworthy part
Of such a splendid record. I, in turn,
Am I too made the slave of love, and brought
To stoop so low? The more contemptible
That no renown is mine such as exalts
The name of Theseus, that no monsters quell'd
Have given me a right to share his weakness.
And if my pride of heart must needs be humbled,
Aricia should have been the last to tame it.
Was I beside myself to have forgotten
Eternal barriers of separation

Between us? By my father's stern command
Her brethren's blood must ne'er be reinforced
By sons of hers; he dreads a single shoot
From stock so guilty, and would fain with her
Bury their name, that, even to the tomb
Content to be his ward, for her no torch
Of Hymen may be lit. Shall I espouse
Her rights against my sire, rashly provoke
His wrath, and launch upon a mad career—

THERAMENES.—The gods, dear prince, if once your hour is come,
Care little for the reasons that should guide us.
Wishing to shut your eyes, Theseus unseals them;
His hatred, stirring a rebellious flame
Within you, lends his enemy new charms.
And, after all, why should a guiltless passion
Alarm you? Dare you not essay its sweetness,
But follow rather a fastidious scruple?
Fear you to stray where Hercules has wander'd?
What heart so stout that Venus has not vanquish'd?
Where would you be yourself, so long her foe,
Had your own mother, constant in her scorn
Of love, ne'er glowed with tenderness for Theseus?
What boots it to affect a pride you feel not?
Confess it, all is changed; for some time past
You have been seldom seen with wild delight
Urging the rapid car along the strand,
Or, skilful in the art that Neptune taught,
Making th' unbroken steed obey the bit;
Less often have the woods return'd your shouts;
A secret burden on your sprits cast
Has dimm'd your eye. How can I doubt you love?
Vainly would you conceal the fatal wound.
Has not the fair Aricia touch'd your heart?

HIPPOLYTUS.—Theramenes, I go to find my father.

THERAMENES.—Will you not see the queen before you start,
My prince?

HIPPOLYTUS.— That is my purpose: you can tell her.
Yes, I will see her; duty bids me do it.
But what new ill vexes her dear Œnone?

Scene II.

Hippolytus, Œnone, Theramenes.

ŒNONE.—Alas, my lord, what grief was e'er like mine?
The queen has almost touch'd the gates of death.
Vainly close watch I keep by day and night,
E'en in my arms a secret malady
Slays her, and all her senses are disorder'd.
Weary yet restless from her couch she rises,
Pants for the outer air, but bids me see
That no one on her misery intrudes.
She comes.
HIPPOLYTUS.— Enough. She shall not be disturb'd,
Nor be confronted with a face she hates.

Scene III.

Phædra, Œnone.

PHÆDRA.—We have gone far enough. Stay, dear Œnone;
Strength fails me, and I needs must rest awhile.
My eyes are dazzled with this glaring light
So long unseen, my trembling knees refuse
Support. Ah me!
ŒNONE.— Would Heaven that our tears
Might bring relief!
PHÆDRA.— Ah, how these cumbrous gauds,
These veils oppress me! What officious hand
Has tied these knots, and gather'd o'er my brow
These clustering coils? How all conspires to add
To my distress!
ŒNONE.— What is one moment wish'd,
The next, is irksome. Did you not just now,
Sick of inaction, bid us deck you out,
And, with your former energy recall'd,
Desire to go abroad, and see the light
Of day once more? You see it, and would fain
Be hidden from the sunshine that you sought.
PHÆDRA.—Thou glorious author of a hapless race,

Whose daughter 'twas my mother's boast to be,
Who well may'st blush to see me in such plight,
For the last time I come to look on thee,
O Sun!

ŒNONE.— What! Still are you in love with death?
Shall I ne'er see you, reconciled to life,
Forego these cruel accents of despair?

PHÆDRA.—Would I were seated in the forest's shade!
When may I follow with delighted eye,
Thro' glorious dust flying in full career,
A chariot—

ŒNONE.— Madam?

PHÆDRA.— Have I lost my senses?
What said I? and where am I? Whither stray
Vain wishes? Ah! The gods have made me mad.
I blush, Œnone, and confusion covers
My face, for I have let you see too clearly
The shame and grief that, in my own despite,
O'erflow these eyes of mine.

ŒNONE.— If you must blush,
Blush at a silence that inflames your woes.
Resisting all my care, deaf to my voice,
Will you have no compassion on yourself,
But let your life be ended in mid course?
What evil spell has drain'd its fountain dry?
Thrice have the shades of night obscured the heav'ns
Since sleep has enter'd thro' your eyes, and thrice
The dawn has chased the darkness thence, since food
Pass'd your wan lips, and you are faint and languid.
To what dread purpose is your heart inclined?
How dare you make attempts upon your life,
And so offend the gods who gave it you,
Prove false to Theseus and your marriage vows,
Ay, and betray your most unhappy children,
Bending their necks yourself beneath the yoke?
That day, be sure, which robs them of their mother,
Will give high hopes back to the stranger's son,
To that proud enemy of you and yours,
To whom an Amazon gave birth, I mean
Hippolytus—

PHÆDRA.— Ye gods!
ŒNONE.— Ah, this reproach
Moves you!
PHÆDRA.— Unhappy woman, to what name
Gave your mouth utterance?
ŒNONE.— Your wrath is just.
'Tis well that that ill-omen'd name can rouse
Such rage. Then live. Let love and duty urge
Their claims. Live, suffer not this son of Scythia,
Crushing your children 'neath his odious sway,
To rule the noble offspring of the gods,
The purest blood of Greece. Make no delay;
Each moment threatens death; quickly restore
Your shatter'd strength, while yet the torch of life
Holds out, and can be fann'd into a flame.
PHÆDRA.—Too long have I endured its guilt and shame!
ŒNONE.—Why? What remorse gnaws at your heart? What crime
Can have disturb'd you thus? Your hands are not
Polluted with the blood of innocence?
PHÆDRA.—Thanks be to Heav'n, my hands are free from stain.
Would that my soul were innocent as they!
ŒNONE.—What awful project have you then conceived,
Whereat your conscience should be still alarm'd?
PHÆDRA.—Have I not said enough? Spare me the rest.
I die to save myself a full confession.
ŒNONE.—Die then, and keep a silence so inhuman;
But seek some other hand to close your eyes.
Tho' but a spark of life remains within you,
My soul shall go before you to the Shades.
A thousand roads are always open thither;
Pain'd at your want of confidence, I'll choose
The shortest. Cruel one, when has my faith
Deceived you? Think how in my arms you lay
New born. For you, my country and my children
I have forsaken. Do you thus repay
My faithful service?
PHÆDRA.— What do you expect
From words so bitter? Were I to break silence,
Horror would freeze your blood.

ŒNONE.— What can you say
To horrify me more than to behold
You die before my eyes?
PHÆDRA.— When you shall know
My crime, my death will follow none the less,
But with the added stain of guilt.
ŒNONE.— Dear Madam,
By all the tears that I have shed for you,
By these weak knees I clasp, relieve my mind
From torturing doubt.
PHÆDRA.— It is your wish. Then rise.
ŒNONE.—I hear you. Speak.
PHÆDRA.— Heav'ns! How shall I begin?
ŒNONE.—Dismiss vain fears, you wound me with distrust.
PHÆDRA.—O fatal animosity of Venus!
Into what wild distractions did she cast
My mother!
ŒNONE.— Be they blotted from remembrance,
And for all time to come buried in silence.
PHÆDRA.—My sister Ariadne, by what love
Were you betray'd to death, on lonely shores
Forsaken!
ŒNONE.— Madam, what deep-seated pain
Prompts these reproaches against all your kin?
PHÆDRA.—It is the will of Venus, and I perish,
Last, most unhappy of a family
Where all were wretched.
ŒNONE.— Do you love?
PHÆDRA.— I feel
All its mad fever.
ŒNONE.—Ah! For whom?
PHÆDRA.— Hear now
The crowning horror. Yes, I love—my lips
Tremble to say his name.
ŒNONE.— Whom?
PHÆDRA.— Know you him,
Son of the Amazon, whom I've oppress'd
So long?
ŒNONE.— Hippolytus? Great gods!
PHÆDRA.— 'Tis you
Have named him.

ŒNONE.— All my blood within my veins
Seems frozen. O despair! O cursèd race!
Ill-omen'd journey! Land of misery!
Why did we ever reach thy dangerous shores?
PHÆDRA.—My wound is not so recent. Scarcely had I
Been bound to Theseus by the marriage yoke,
And happiness and peace seem'd well secured,
When Athens show'd me my proud enemy.
I look'd, alternately turn'd pale and blush'd
To see him, and my soul grew all distraught;
A mist obscured my vision, and my voice
Falter'd, my blood ran cold, then burn'd like fire;
Venus I felt in all my fever'd frame,
Whose fury had so many of my race
Pursued. With fervent vows I sought to shun
Her torments, built and deck'd for her a shrine,
And there, 'mid countless victims did I seek
The reason I had lost; but all for nought,
No remedy could cure the wounds of love!
In vain I offer'd incense on her altars;
When I invoked her name, my heart adored
Hippolytus, before me constantly;
And when I made her altars smoke with victims,
'Twas for a god whose name I dared not utter.
I fled his presence everywhere, but found him—
O crowning horror!—in his father's features.
Against myself, at last, I raised revolt,
And stirr'd my courage up to persecute
The enemy I loved. To banish him
I wore a step-dame's harsh and jealous carriage,
With ceaseless cries I clamor'd for his exile,
Till I had torn him from his father's arms.
I breathed once more, Œnone; in his absence
My days flow'd on less troubled than before,
And innocent. Submissive to my husband,
I hid my grief, and of our fatal marriage
Cherish'd the fruits. Vain caution! Cruel Fate!
Brought hither by my spouse himself, I saw
Again the enemy whom I had banish'd,
And the old wound too quickly bled afresh.
No longer is it love hid in my heart,

But Venus in her might seizing her prey.
I have conceived just terror for my crime;
I hate my life, and hold my love in horror.
Dying I wish'd to keep my fame unsullied,
And bury in the grave a guilty passion;
But I have been unable to withstand
Tears and entreaties, I have told you all;
Content, if only, as my end draws near,
You do not vex me with unjust reproaches,
Nor with vain efforts seek to snatch from death
The last faint lingering sparks of vital breath.

Scene IV.

Phædra, Œnone, Panope.

PANOPE.—Fain would I hide from you tidings so sad,
But 'tis my duty, Madam, to reveal them.
The hand of death has seized your peerless husband,
And you are last to hear of this disaster.
ŒNONE.—What say you, Panope?
PANOPE.— The queen, deceived
By a vain trust in Heav'n, begs safe return
For Theseus, while Hippolytus his son
Learns of his death from vessels that are now
In port.
PHÆDRA.— Ye gods!
PANOPE.— Divided counsels sway
The choice of Athens; some would have the prince,
Your child, for master; others, disregarding
The laws, dare to support the stranger's son.
'Tis even said that a presumptuous faction
Would crown Aricia and the house of Pallas.
I deem'd it right to warn you of this danger.
Hippolytus already is prepared
To start, and should he show himself at Athens,
'Tis to be fear'd the fickle crowd will all
Follow his lead.
ŒNONE.— Enough. The queen, who hears you,
By no means will neglect this timely warning.

Scene V.

Phædra, Œnone.

ŒNONE.—Dear lady, I had almost ceased to urge
The wish that you should live, thinking to follow
My mistress to the tomb, from which my voice
Had fail'd to turn you; but this new misfortune
Alters the aspect of affairs, and prompts
Fresh measures. Madam, Theseus is no more,
You must supply his place. He leaves a son,
A slave, if you should die, but, if you live,
A King. On whom has he to lean but you?
No hand but yours will dry his tears. Then live
For him, or else the tears of innocence
Will move the gods, his ancestors, to wrath
Against his mother. Live, your guilt is gone,
No blame attaches to your passion now.
The King's decease has freed you from the bonds
That made the crime and horror of your love.
Hippolytus no longer need be dreaded,
Him you may see henceforth without reproach.
It may be, that, convinced of your aversion,
He means to head the rebels. Undeceive him,
Soften his callous heart, and bend his pride.
King of this fertile land, in Trœzen here
His portion lies; but as he knows, the laws
Give to your son the ramparts that Minerva
Built and protects. A common enemy
Threatens you both, unite then to oppose
Aricia.

PHÆDRA.— To your counsel I consent.
Yes, I will live, if life can be restored,
If my affection for a son has pow'r
To rouse my sinking heart at such a dangerous hour.

ACT SECOND.

Scene I.

Aricia, Ismene.

ARICIA.—Hippolytus request to see me here!
Hippolytus desire to bid farewell!
Is 't true, Ismene? Are you not deceived?
ISMENE.—This is the first result of Theseus' death.
Prepare yourself to see from every side
Hearts turn toward you that were kept away
By Theseus. Mistress of her lot at last,
Aricia soon shall find all Greece fall low,
To do her homage.
ARICIA.— 'Tis not then, Ismene,
An idle tale? Am I no more a slave?
Have I no enemies?
ISMENE.— The gods oppose
Your peace no longer, and the soul of Theseus
Is with your brothers.
ARICIA.— Does the voice of fame
Tell how he died?
ISMENE.— Rumors incredible
Are spread. Some say that, seizing a new bride,
The faithless husband by the waves was swallow'd.
Others affirm, and this report prevails,
That with Pirithoüs to the world below
He went, and saw the shores of dark Cocytus,
Showing himself alive to the pale ghosts;
But that he could not leave those gloomy realms,
Which whoso enters there abides forever.
ARICIA.—Shall I believe that ere his destined hour
A mortal may descend into the gulf
Of Hades? What attraction could o'ercome
Its terrors?
ISMENE.— He is dead, and you alone
Doubt it. The men of Athens mourn his loss.
Trœzen already hails Hippolytus

As King. And Phædra, fearing for her son,
Asks counsel of the friends who share her trouble,
Here in this palace.

ARICIA.— Will Hippolytus,
Think you, prove kinder than his sire, make light
My chains, and pity my misfortunes?

ISMENE.— Yes,
I think so, Madam.

ARICIA.— Ah, you know him not
Or you would never deem so hard a heart
Can pity feel, or me alone except
From the contempt in which he holds our sex.
Has he not long avoided every spot
Where we resort?

ISMENE.— I know what tales are told
Of proud Hippolytus, but I have seen
Him near you, and have watch'd with curious eye
How one esteem'd so cold would bear himself.
Little did his behavior correspond
With what I look'd for; in his face confusion
Appear'd at your first glance, he could not turn
His languid eyes away, but gazed on you.
Love is a word that may offend his pride,
But what the tongue disowns, looks can betray.

ARICIA.—How eagerly my heart hears what you say,
Tho' it may be delusion, dear Ismene!
Did it seem possible to you, who know me,
That I, sad sport of a relentless Fate,
Fed upon bitter tears by night and day,
Could ever taste the maddening draught of love?
The last frail offspring of a royal race,
Children of Earth, I only have survived
War's fury. Cut off in the flow'r of youth,
Mown by the sword, six brothers have I lost,
The hope of an illustrious house, whose blood
Earth drank with sorrow, near akin to his
Whom she herself produced. Since then, you know
How thro' all Greece no heart has been allow'd
To sigh for me, lest by a sister's flame
The brothers' ashes be perchance rekindled.

You know, besides, with what disdain I view'd
My conqueror's suspicions and precautions,
And how, opposed as I have ever been
To love, I often thank'd the King's injustice
Which happily confirm'd my inclination.
But then I never had beheld his son.
Not that, attracted merely by the eye,
I love him for his beauty and his grace,
Endowments which he owes to Nature's bounty,
Charms which he seems to know not or to scorn.
I love and prize in him riches more rare,
The virtues of his sire, without his faults.
I love, as I must own, that generous pride
Which ne'er has stoop'd beneath the amorous yoke.
Phædra reaps little glory from a lover
So lavish of his sighs; I am too proud
To share devotion with a thousand others,
Or enter where the door is always open.
But to make one who ne'er has stoop'd before
Bend his proud neck, to pierce a heart of stone,
To bind a captive whom his chains astonish,
Who vainly 'gainst a pleasing yoke rebels—
That piques my ardor, and I long for that.
'Twas easier to disarm the god of strength
Than this Hippolytus, for Hercules
Yielded so often to the eyes of beauty,
As to make triumph cheap. But, dear Ismene,
I take too little heed of opposition
Beyond my pow'r to quell, and you may hear me,
Humbled by sore defeat, upbraid the pride
I now admire. What! Can he love? and I
Have had the happiness to bend—

ISMENE.— He comes.
Yourself shall hear him.

Scene II.

Hippolytus, Aricia, Ismene.

HIPPOLYTUS.— Lady, ere I go
My duty bids me tell you of your change
Of fortune. My worst fears are realized;
My sire is dead. Yes, his protracted absence
Was caused as I foreboded. Death alone,
Ending his toils, could keep him from the world
Conceal'd so long. The gods at last have doom'd
Alcides' friend, companion, and successor.
I think your hatred, tender to his virtues,
Can hear such terms of praise without resentment,
Knowing them due. One hope have I that soothes
My sorrow: I can free you from restraint.
Lo, I revoke the laws whose rigor moved
My pity; you are at your own disposal,
Both heart and hand; here, in my heritage,
In Trœzen, where my grandsire Pittheus reign'd
Of yore and I am now acknowledged King,
I leave you free, free as myself—and more.
ARICIA.—Your kindness is too great, 'tis overwhelming.
Such generosity, that pays disgrace
With honor, lends more force than you can think
To those harsh laws from which you would release me.
HIPPOLYTUS.—Athens, uncertain how to fill the throne
Of Theseus, speaks of you, anon of me,
And then of Phædra's son.
ARICIA.— Of me, my lord?
HIPPOLYTUS.—I know myself excluded by strict law:
Greece turns to my reproach a foreign mother,
But if my brother were my only rival,
My rights prevail o'er his clearly enough
To make me careless of the law's caprice.
My forwardness is check'd by juster claims:
To you I yield my place, or, rather, own
That it is yours by right, and yours the sceptre,
As handed down from Earth's great son, Erechtheus.
Adoption placed it in the hands of Ægeus;

Athens, by him protected and increased,
Welcomed a king so generous as my sire,
And left your hapless brothers in oblivion.
Now she invites you back within her walls;
Protracted strife has cost her groans enough,
Her fields are glutted with your kinsmen's blood
Fatt'ning the furrows out of which it sprung
At first. I rule this Trœzen; while the son
Of Phædra has in Crete a rich domain.
Athens is yours. I will do all I can
To join for you the votes divided now
Between us.

ARICIA.— Stunn'd at all I hear, my lord,
I fear, I almost fear a dream deceives me.
Am I indeed awake? Can I believe
Such generosity? What god has put it
Into your heart? Well is the fame deserved
That you enjoy! That fame falls short of truth!
Would you for me prove traitor to yourself?
Was it not boon enough never to hate me,
So long to have abstain'd from harboring
The enmity—

HIPPOLYTUS.— To hate you? I, to hate you?
However darkly my fierce pride was painted,
Do you suppose a monster gave me birth?
What savage temper, what envenom'd hatred
Would not be mollified at sight of you?
Could I resist the soul-bewitching charm—

ARICIA.—Why, what is this, Sir?

HIPPOLYTUS.— I have said too much
Not to say more. Prudence in vain resists
The violence of passion. I have broken
Silence at last, and I must tell you now
The secret that my heart can hold no longer.
You see before you an unhappy instance
Of hasty pride, a prince who claims compassion.
I, who, so long the enemy of Love,
Mock'd at his fetters and despised his captives,
Who, pitying poor mortals that were shipwreck'd,
In seeming safety view'd the storms from land,

Now find myself to the same fate exposed,
Toss'd to and fro upon a sea of troubles!
My boldness has been vanquish'd in a moment,
And humbled is the pride wherein I boasted.
For nearly six months past, ashamed, despairing,
Bearing where'er I go the shaft that rends
My heart, I struggle vainly to be free
From you and from myself; I shun you, present;
Absent, I find you near; I see your form
In the dark forest depths; the shades of night,
Nor less broad daylight, bring back to my view
The charms that I avoid; all things conspire
To make Hippolytus your slave. For fruit
Of all my bootless sighs, I fail to find
My former self. My bow and javelins
Please me no more, my chariot is forgotten,
With all the Sea-God's lessons; and the woods
Echo my groans instead of joyous shouts
Urging my fiery steeds.
Hearing this tale
Of passion so uncouth, you blush perchance
At your own handiwork. With what wild words
I offer you my heart, strange captive held
By silken jess! But dearer in your eyes
Should be the offering, that this language comes
Strange to my lips; reject not vows express'd
So ill, which but for you had ne'er been form'd.

Scene III.

Hippolytus, Aricia, Theramenes, Ismene.

THERAMENES.—Prince, the Queen comes. I herald her approach.
'Tis you she seeks.
HIPPOLYTUS.— Me?
THERAMENES.— What her thought may be
I know not. But I speak on her behalf.
She would converse with you ere you go hence.
HIPPOLYTUS.—What shall I say to her? Can she expect—

ARICIA.—You cannot, noble Prince, refuse to hear her,
Howe'er convinced she is your enemy,
Some shade of pity to her tears is due.
HIPPOLYTUS.—Shall we part thus? and will you let me go,
Not knowing if my boldness has offended
The goddess I adore? Whether this heart,
Left in your hands—
ARICIA.— Go, Prince, pursue the schemes
Your generous soul dictates, make Athens own
My sceptre. All the gifts you offer me
Will I accept, but this high throne of empire
Is not the one most precious in my sight.

Scene IV.

Hippolytus, Theramenes.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Friend, is all ready? But the Queen approaches.
Go, see the vessel in fit trim to sail.
Haste, bid the crew aboard, and hoist the signal;
Then soon return, and so deliver me
From interview most irksome.

Scene V.

Phædra, Hippolytus, Œnone.

PHÆDRA [*to Œnone*].— There I see him!
My blood forgets to flow, my tongue to speak
What I am come to say.
ŒNONE.— Think of your son,
How all his hopes depend on you.
PHÆDRA.— I hear
You leave us, and in haste. I come to add
My tears to your distress, and for a son
Plead my alarm. No more has he a father,
And at no distant day my son must witness
My death. Already do a thousand foes
Threaten his youth. You only can defend him.
But in my secret heart remorse awakes,

And fear lest I have shut your ears against
His cries. I tremble lest your righteous anger
Visit on him ere long the hatred earn'd
By me, his mother.

HIPPOLYTUS.— No such base resentment,
Madam, is mine.

PHÆDRA.— I could not blame you, Prince,
If you should hate me. I have injured you:
So much you know, but could not read my heart.
T' incur your enmity has been mine aim:
The self-same borders could not hold us both;
In public and in private I declared
Myself your foe, and found no peace till seas
Parted us from each other. I forbade
Your very name to be pronounced before me.
And yet if punishment should be proportion'd
To the offence, if only hatred draws
Your hatred, never woman merited
More pity, less deserved your enmity.

HIPPOLYTUS.—A mother jealous of her children's rights
Seldom forgives the offspring of a wife
Who reign'd before her. Harassing suspicions
Are common sequels of a second marriage.
Of me would any other have been jealous
No less than you, perhaps more violent?

PHÆDRA.—Ah, Prince, how Heav'n has from the general law
Made me exempt, be that same Heav'n my witness!
Far different is the trouble that devours me!

HIPPOLYTUS.—This is no time for self-reproaches, Madam.
It may be that your husband still beholds
The light, and Heav'n may grant him safe return,
In answer to our prayers. His guardian god
Is Neptune, ne'er by him invoked in vain.

PHÆDRA.—He who has seen the mansions of the dead
Returns not thence. Since to those gloomy shores
Theseus is gone, 'tis vain to hope that Heav'n
May send him back. Prince, there is no release
From Acheron's greedy maw. And yet, methinks,
He lives, and breathes in you. I see him still
Before me, and to him I seem to speak;

My heart—
Oh! I am mad; do what I will,
I cannot hide my passion.

HIPPOLYTUS.— Yes, I see
The strange effects of love. Theseus, tho' dead,
Seems present to your eyes, for in your soul
There burns a constant flame.

PHÆDRA.— Ah, yes, for Theseus
I languish and I long, not as the Shades
Have seen him, of a thousand different forms
The fickle lover, and of Pluto's bride
The would-be ravisher, but faithful, proud
E'en to a slight disdain, with youthful charms
Attracting every heart, as gods are painted,
Or like yourself. He had your mien, your eyes,
Spoke and could blush like you, when to the isle
Of Crete, my childhood's home, he cross'd the waves,
Worthy to win the love of Minos' daughters.
What were you doing then? Why did he gather
The flow'r of Greece, and leave Hippolytus?
Oh, why were you too young to have embark'd
On board the ship that brought thy sire to Crete?
At your hands would the monster then have perish'd,
Despite the windings of his vast retreat.
To guide your doubtful steps within the maze
My sister would have arm'd you with the clue.
But no, therein would Phædra have forestall'd her,
Love would have first inspired me with the thought;
And I it would have been whose timely aid
Had taught you all the labyrinth's crooked ways.
What anxious care a life so dear had cost me!
No thread had satisfied your lover's fears:
I would myself have wish'd to lead the way,
And share the peril you were bound to face;
Phædra with you would have explored the maze,
With you emerged in safety, or have perish'd.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Gods! What is this I hear? Have you forgotten
That Theseus is my father and your husband?

PHÆDRA.—Why should you fancy I have lost remembrance
Thereof, and am regardless of mine honor?

HIPPOLYTUS.—Forgive me, Madam. With a blush I own
That I misconstrued words of innocence.
For very shame I cannot bear your sight
Longer. I go—
PHÆDRA.— Ah! cruel Prince, too well
You understood me. I have said enough
To save you from mistake. I love. But think not
That at the moment when I love you most
I do not feel my guilt; no weak compliance
Has fed the poison that infects my brain.
The ill-starr'd object of celestial vengeance,
I am not so detestable to you
As to myself. The gods will bear me witness,
Who have within my veins kindled this fire,
The gods, who take a barbarous delight
In leading a poor mortal's heart astray.
Do you yourself recall to mind the past:
'Twas not enough for me to fly, I chased you
Out of the country, wishing to appear
Inhuman, odious; to resist you better,
I sought to make you hate me. All in vain!
Hating me more I loved you none the less:
New charms were lent to you by your misfortunes.
I have been drown'd in tears, and scorch'd by fire;
Your own eyes might convince you of the truth,
If for one moment you could look at me.
What is 't I say? Think you this vile confession
That I have made is what I meant to utter?
Not daring to betray a son for whom
I trembled, 'twas to beg you not to hate him
I came. Weak purpose of a heart too full
Of love for you to speak of aught besides!
Take your revenge, punish my odious passion;
Prove yourself worthy of your valiant sire,
And rid the world of an offensive monster!
Does Theseus' widow dare to love his son?
The frightful monster! Let her not escape you!
Here is my heart. This is the place to strike.
Already prompt to expiate its guilt,
I feel it leap impatiently to meet

Your arm. Strike home. Or, if it would disgrace you
To steep your hand in such polluted blood,
If that were punishment too mild to slake
Your hatred, lend me then your sword, if not
Your arm. Quick, give 't.

ŒNONE.— What, Madam, will you do?
Just gods! But someone comes. Go, fly from shame,
You cannot 'scape if seen by any thus.

Scene VI.

Hippolytus, Theramenes.

THERAMENES.—Is that the form of Phædra that I see
Hurried away? What mean these signs of sorrow?
Where is your sword? Why are you pale, confused?

HIPPOLYTUS.—Friend, let us fly. I am, indeed, confounded
With horror and astonishment extreme.
Phædra—but no; gods, let this dreadful secret
Remain forever buried in oblivion.

THERAMENES.—The ship is ready if you wish to sail.
But Athens has already giv'n her vote;
Their leaders have consulted all her tribes;
Your brother is elected, Phædra wins.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Phædra?

THERAMENES.— A herald, charged with a commission
From Athens, has arrived to place the reins
Of power in her hands. Her son is King.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Ye gods, who know her, do ye thus reward
Her virtue?

THERAMENES.— A faint rumor meanwhile whispers
That Theseus is not dead, but in Epirus
Has shown himself. But, after all my search,
I know too well—

HIPPOLYTUS.— Let nothing be neglected.
This rumor must be traced back to its source.
If it be found unworthy of belief,
Let us set sail, and cost whate'er it may,
To hands deserving trust the sceptre's sway.

ACT THIRD.

Scène I.

Phædra, Œnone.

PHÆDRA.—Ah! Let them take elsewhere the worthless honors
They bring me. Why so urgent I should see them?
What flattering balm can soothe my wounded heart?
Far rather hide me: I have said too much.
My madness has burst forth like streams in flood,
And I have utter'd what should ne'er have reach'd
His ear. Gods! How he heard me! How reluctant
To catch my meaning, dull and cold as marble,
And eager only for a quick retreat!
How oft his blushes made my shame the deeper!
Why did you turn me from the death I sought?
Ah! When his sword was pointed to my bosom,
Did he grow pale, or try to snatch it from me?
That I had touch'd it was enough for him
To render it forever horrible,
Leaving defilement on the hand that holds it.
ŒNONE.—Thus brooding on your bitter disappointment,
You only fan a fire that must be stifled.
Would it not be more worthy of the blood
Of Minos to find peace in nobler cares,
And, in defiance of a wretch who flies
From what he hates, reign, mount the proffer'd throne?
PHÆDRA.—I reign! Shall I the rod of empire sway,
When reason reigns no longer o'er myself?
When I have lost control of all my senses?
When 'neath a shameful yoke I scarce can breathe?
When I am dying?
ŒNONE.— Fly.
PHÆDRA.— I cannot leave him.
ŒNONE.—Dare you not fly from him you dared to banish?
PHÆDRA.—The time for that is past. He knows my frenzy.
I have o'erstepp'd the bounds of modesty,
And blazon'd forth my shame before his eyes.

Hope stole into my heart against my will.
Did you not rally my declining pow'rs?
Was it not you yourself recall'd my soul
When fluttering on my lips, and with your counsel,
Lent me fresh life, and told me I might love him?

ŒNONE.—Blame me or blame me not for your misfortunes,
Of what was I incapable, to save you?
But if your indignation e'er was roused
By insult, can you pardon his contempt?
How cruelly his eyes, severely fix'd,
Survey'd you almost prostrate at his feet!
How hateful then appear'd his savage pride!
Why did not Phædra see him then as I
Beheld him?

PHÆDRA.— This proud mood that you resent
May yield to time. The rudeness of the forests
Where he was bred, inured to rigorous laws,
Clings to him still; love is a word he ne'er
Had heard before. It may be his surprise
Stunn'd him, and too much vehemence was shown
In all I said.

ŒNONE.— Remember that his mother
Was a barbarian.

PHÆDRA.— Scythian tho' she was,
She learnt to love.

ŒNONE.— He has for all the sex
Hatred intense.

PHÆDRA.— Then in his heart no rival
Shall ever reign. Your counsel comes too late.
Œnone, serve my madness, not my reason.
His heart is inaccessible to love:
Let us attack him where he has more feeling.
The charms of sovereignty appear'd to touch him;
He could not hide that he was drawn to Athens;
His vessels' prows were thither turn'd already,
All sail was set to scud before the breeze.
Go you on my behalf, to his ambition
Appeal, and let the prospect of the crown
Dazzle his eyes. The sacred diadem
Shall deck his brow, no higher honor mine

Than there to bind it. His shall be the pow'r
I cannot keep; and he shall teach my son
How to rule men. It may be he will deign
To be to him a father. Son and mother
He shall control. Try ev'ry means to move him;
Your words will find more favor than can mine.
Urge him with groans and tears; show Phædra dying,
Nor blush to use the voice of supplication.
In you is my last hope; I'll sanction all
You say; and on the issue hangs my fate.

Scene II.

PHÆDRA [*alone*].—Venus implacable, who seest me shamed
And sore confounded, have I not enough
Been humbled? How can cruelty be stretch'd
Farther? Thy shafts have all gone home, and thou
Hast triumph'd. Would'st thou win a new renown?
Attack an enemy more contumacious:
Hippolytus neglects thee, braves thy wrath,
Nor ever at thine altars bow'd the knee.
Thy name offends his proud, disdainful ears.
Our interests are alike: avenge thyself,
Force him to love—
But what is this? Œnone
Return'd already? He detests me then,
And will not hear you.

Scene III.

Phædra, Œnone.

ŒNONE.—Madam, you must stifle
A fruitless love. Recall your former virtue:
The king who was thought dead will soon appear
Before your eyes, Theseus has just arrived,
Theseus is here. The people flock to see him
With eager haste. I went by your command
To find the prince, when with a thousand shouts
The air was rent—

PHÆDRA.— My husband is alive,
That is enough, Œnone. I have own'd
A passion that dishonors him. He lives:
I ask to know no more.
ŒNONE.— What?
PHÆDRA.— I foretold it,
But you refused to hear. Your tears prevail'd
Over my just remorse. Dying this morn,
I had deserved compassion; your advice
I took, and die dishonor'd.
ŒNONE.— Die?
PHÆDRA.— Just Heav'ns!
What have I done to-day? My husband comes,
With him his son: and I shall see the witness
Of my adulterous flame watch with what face
I greet his father, while my heart is big
With sighs he scorn'd, and tears that could not move him
Moisten mine eyes. Think you that his respect
For Theseus will induce him to conceal
My madness, nor disgrace his sire and king?
Will he be able to keep back the horror
He has for me? His silence would be vain.
I know my treason, and I lack the boldness
Of those abandon'd women who can taste
Tranquillity in crime, and show a forehead
All unabash'd. I recognize my madness,
Recall it all. These vaulted roofs, methinks,
These walls can speak, and, ready to accuse me,
Wait but my husband's presence to reveal
My perfidy. Death only can remove
This weight of horror. Is it such misfortune
To cease to live? Death causes no alarm
To misery. I only fear the name
That I shall leave behind me. For my sons
How sad a heritage! The blood of Jove
Might justly swell the pride that boasts descent
From Heav'n, but heavy weighs a mother's guilt
Upon her offspring. Yes, I dread the scorn
That will be cast on them with too much truth,
For my disgrace. I tremble when I think

That, crush'd beneath that curse, they'll never dare
To raise their eyes.
ŒNONE.— Doubt not I pity both;
Never was fear more just than yours. Why then
Expose them to this ignominy? Why
Will you accuse yourself? You thus destroy
The only hope that's left; it will be said
That Phædra, conscious of her perfidy,
Fled from her husband's sight. Hippolytus
Will be rejoiced that, dying, you should lend
His charge support. What can I answer him?
He'll find it easy to confute my tale,
And I shall hear him with an air of triumph
To every open ear repeat your shame.
Sooner than that may fire from heav'n consume me!
Deceive me not. Say, do you love him still?
How look you now on this contemptuous prince?
PHÆDRA.—As on a monster frightful to mine eyes.
ŒNONE.—Why yield him then an easy victory?
You fear him. Venture to accuse him first,
As guilty of the charge which he may bring
This day against you. Who can say 'tis false?
All tells against him: in your hands his sword
Happily left behind, your present trouble,
Your past distress, your warnings to his father,
His exile which your earnest pray'rs obtain'd.
PHÆDRA.—What! Would you have me slander innocence?
ŒNONE.—My zeal has need of nought from you but silence.
Like you I tremble, and am loath to do it;
More willingly I'd face a thousands deaths.
But since without this bitter remedy
I lose you, and to me your life outweighs
All else, I'll speak. Theseus, howe'er enraged,
Will do no worse than banish him again.
A father, when he punishes, remains
A father, and his ire is satisfied
With a light sentence. But if guiltless blood
Should flow, is not your honor of more moment?
A treasure far too precious to be risk'd?
You must submit, whatever it dictates;

For, when our reputation is at stake,
All must be sacrificed, conscience itself.
But someone comes. 'Tis Theseus.

PHÆDRA.— And I see
Hippolytus, my ruin plainly written
In his stern eyes. Do what you will; I trust
My fate to you. I cannot help myself.

Scene IV.

Theseus, Hippolytus, Phædra, Œnone, Theramenes.

THESEUS.—Fortune no longer fights against my wishes,
Madam, and to your arms restores—

PHÆDRA.— Stay, Theseus!
Do not profane endearments that were once
So sweet, but which I am unworthy now
To taste. You have been wrong'd. Fortune has proved
Spiteful, nor in your absence spared your wife.
I am unfit to meet your fond caress,
How I may bear my shame my only care
Henceforth.

Scene V.

Theseus, Hippolytus, Theramenes.

THESEUS.— Strange welcome for your father, this!
What does it mean, my son?

HIPPOLYTUS.— Phædra alone
Can solve this mystery. But if my wish
Can move you, let me never see her more;
Suffer Hippolytus to disappear
Forever from the home that holds your wife.

THESEUS.—You, my son! Leave me?

HIPPOLYTUS.— 'Twas not I who sought her:
'Twas you who led her footsteps to these shores.
At your departure you thought meet, my lord,
To trust Aricia and the Queen to this
Trœzenian land, and I myself was charged
With their protection. But what cares henceforth

Need keep me here? My youth of idleness
Has shown its skill enough o'er paltry foes
That range the woods. May I not quit a life
Of such inglorious ease, and dip my spear
In nobler blood? Ere you had reach'd my age
More than one tyrant, monster more than one
Had felt the weight of your stout arm. Already,
Successful in attacking insolence,
You had removed all dangers that infested
Our coasts to east and west. The traveller fear'd
Outrage no longer. Hearing of your deeds,
Already Hercules relied on you,
And rested from his toils. While I, unknown
Son of so brave a sire, am far behind
Even my mother's footsteps. Let my courage
Have scope to act, and if some monster yet
Has 'scaped you, let me lay the glorious spoils
Down at your feet; or let the memory
Of death faced nobly keep my name alive,
And prove to all the world I was your son.

THESEUS.—Why, what is this? What terror has possess'd
My family to make them fly before me?
If I return to find myself so fear'd,
So little welcome, why did Heav'n release me
From prison? My sole friend, misled by passion,
Was bent on robbing of his wife the tyrant
Who ruled Epirus. With regret I lent
The lover aid, but Fate had made us blind,
Myself as well as him. The tyrant seized me
Defenceless and unarm'd. Pirithoüs
I saw with tears cast forth to be devour'd
By savage beasts that lapp'd the blood of men.
Myself in gloomy caverns he enclosed,
Deep in the bowels of the earth, and nigh
To Pluto's realms. Six months I lay ere Heav'n
Had pity, and I 'scaped the watchful eyes
That guarded me. Then did I purge the world
Of a foul foe, and he himself has fed
His monsters. But, when with expectant joy
To all that is most precious I draw near

Of what the gods have left me, when my soul
Looks for full satisfaction in a sight
So dear, my only welcome is a shudder,
Embrace rejected, and a hasty flight.
Inspiring, as I clearly do, such terror,
Would I were still a prisoner in Epirus!
Phædra complains that I have suffer'd outrage.
Who has betray'd me? Speak. Why was I not
Avenged? Has Greece, to whom mine arm so oft
Brought useful aid, shelter'd the criminal?
You make no answer. Is my son, mine own
Dear son, confederate with mine enemies?
I'll enter. This suspense is overwhelming.
I'll learn at once the culprit and the crime,
And Phædra must explain her troubled state.

Scene VI.

Hippolytus, Theramenes.

HIPPOLYTUS.—What do these words portend, which seem'd to freeze
My very blood? Will Phædra, in her frenzy,
Accuse herself, and seal her own destruction?
What will the King say? Gods! What fatal poison
Has love spread over all his house! Myself,
Full of a fire his hatred disapproves,
How changed he finds me from the son he knew!
With dark forebodings is my mind alarm'd,
But innocence has surely nought to fear.
Come, let us go, and in some other place
Consider how I best may move my sire
To tenderness, and tell him of a flame
Vex'd but not vanquish'd by a father's blame.

ACT FOURTH.

Scene I.

Theseus, Œnone.

THESEUS.—Ah! What is this I hear? Presumptuous traitor!
And would he have disgraced his father's honor?
With what relentless footsteps Fate pursues me!
Whither I go I know not, nor where now
I am. O kind affection ill repaid!
Audacious scheme! Abominable thought!
To reach the object of his foul desire
The wretch disdain'd not to use violence.
I know this sword that served him in his fury,
The sword I gave him for a nobler use.
Could not the sacred ties of blood restrain him?
And Phædra—was she loath to have him punish'd?
She held her tongue. Was that to spare the culprit?
ŒNONE.—Nay, but to spare a most unhappy father.
O'erwhelm'd with shame that her eyes should have kindled
So infamous a flame and prompted him
To crime so heinous, Phædra would have died.
I saw her raise her arm, and ran to save her.
To me alone you owe it that she lives;
And, in my pity both for her and you,
Have I against my will interpreted
Her tears.
THESEUS.— The traitor! He might well turn pale.
'Twas fear that made him tremble when he saw me.
I was astonish'd that he show'd no pleasure;
His frigid greeting chill'd my tenderness.
But was this guilty passion that devours him
Declared already ere I banish'd him
From Athens?
ŒNONE.— Sire, remember how the Queen
Urged you. Illicit love caused all her hatred.
THESEUS.—And then this fire broke out again at Trœzen?

ŒNONE.—Sire, I have told you all. Too long the Queen
Has been allow'd to bear her grief alone.
Let me now leave you and attend to her.

Scene II.

Theseus, Hippolytus.

THESEUS.—Ah! There he is. Great gods! That noble mien
Might well deceive an eye less fond than mine!
Why should the sacred stamp of virtue gleam
Upon the forehead of an impious wretch?
Ought not the blackness of a traitor's heart
To show itself by sure and certain signs?
HIPPOLYTUS.—My father, may I ask what fatal cloud
Has troubled your majestic countenance?
Dare you not trust this secret to your son?
THESEUS.—Traitor, how dare you show yourself before me?
Monster, whom Heaven's bolts have spared too long!
Survivor of that robber crew whereof
I cleansed the earth. After your brutal lust
Scorn'd even to respect my marriage bed,
You venture—you, my hated foe—to come
Into my presence, here, where all is full
Of your foul infamy, instead of seeking
Some unknown land that never heard my name.
Fly, traitor, fly! Stay not to tempt the wrath
That I can scarce restrain, nor brave my hatred.
Disgrace enough have I incurr'd forever
In being father of so vile a son,
Without your death staining indelibly
The glorious record of my noble deeds.
Fly, and unless you wish quick punishment
To add you to the criminals cut off
By me, take heed this sun that lights us now
Ne'er see you more set foot upon this soil.
I tell you once again—fly, haste, return not,
Rid all my realms of your atrocious presence.
To thee, to thee, great Neptune, I appeal;
If erst I clear'd thy shores of foul assassins,

Recall thy promise to reward those efforts,
Crown'd with success, by granting my first pray'r.
Confined for long in close captivity,
I have not yet call'd on thy pow'rful aid,
Sparing to use the valued privilege
Till at mine utmost need. The time is come,
I ask thee now. Avenge a wretched father!
I leave this traitor to thy wrath; in blood
Quench his outrageous fires, and by thy fury
Theseus will estimate thy favor tow'rds him.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Phædra accuses me of lawless passion!
This crowning horror all my soul confounds;
Such unexpected blows, falling at once,
O'erwhelm me, choke my utterance, strike me dumb.

THESEUS.—Traitor, you reckon'd that in timid silence
Phædra would bury your brutality.
You should not have abandon'd in your flight
The sword that in her hands helps to condemn you
Or rather, to complete your perfidy,
You should have robb'd her both of speech and life.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Justly indignant at a lie so black
I might be pardon'd if I told the truth;
But it concerns your honor to conceal it.
Approve the reverence that shuts my mouth;
And, without wishing to increase your woes,
Examine closely what my life has been.
Great crimes are never single, they are link'd
To former faults. He who has once transgress'd
May violate at last all that men hold
Most sacred; vice, like virtue, has degrees
Of progress; innocence was never seen
To sink at once into the lowest depths
Of guilt. No virtuous man can in a day
Turn traitor, murderer, an incestuous wretch.
The nursling of a chaste, heroic mother,
I have not proved unworthy of my birth.
Pittheus, whose wisdom is by all esteem'd,
Deign'd to instruct me when I left her hands.
It is no wish of mine to vaunt my merits,
But, if I may lay claim to any virtue,

I think beyond all else I have display'd
Abhorrence of those sins with which I'm charged.
For this Hippolytus is known in Greece,
So continent that he is deem'd austere.
All know my abstinence inflexible:
The daylight is not purer than my heart.
How then could I, burning with fire profane—

THESEUS.—Yes, dastard, 'tis that very pride condemns you.
I see the odious reason of your coldness:
Phædra alone bewitch'd your shameless eyes;
Your soul, to others' charms indifferent,
Disdain'd the blameless fires of lawful love.

HIPPOLYTUS.—No, father, I have hidden it too long,
This heart has not disdain'd a sacred flame.
Here at your feet I own my real offence:
I love, and love in truth where you forbid me;
Bound to Aricia by my heart's devotion,
The child of Pallas has subdued your son.
A rebel to your laws, her I adore,
And breathe forth ardent sighs for her alone.

THESEUS.—You love her? Heav'ns!
But no, I see the trick.
You feign a crime to justify yourself.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Sir, I have shunn'd her for six months, and still
Love her. To you yourself I came to tell it,
Trembling the while. Can nothing clear your mind
Of your mistake? What oath can reassure you?
By heav'n and earth and all the pow'rs of nature—

THESEUS.—The wicked never shrink from perjury.
Cease, cease, and spare me irksome protestations,
If your false virtue has no other aid.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Tho' it to you seem false and insincere,
Phædra has secret cause to know it true.

THESEUS.—Ah! how your shamelessness excites my wrath!

HIPPOLYTUS.—What is my term and place of banishment?

THESEUS.—Were you beyond the Pillars of Alcides,
Your perjured presence were too near me yet.

HIPPOLYTUS.—What friends will pity me, when you forsake
And think me guilty of a crime so vile?

THESEUS.—Go, look you out for friends who hold in honor

Adultery and clap their hands at incest,
Low, lawless traitors, steep'd in infamy,
The fit protectors of a knave like you.

HIPPOLYTUS.—Are incest and adultery the words
You cast at me? I hold my tongue. Yet think
What mother Phædra had; too well you know
Her blood, not mine, is tainted with those horrors.

THESEUS.—What! Does your rage before my eyes lose all
Restraint? For the last time—out of my sight!
Hence, traitor! Wait not till a father's wrath
Force thee away 'mid general execration.

Scene III.

THESEUS [*alone*].—Wretch! Thou must meet inevitable ruin.
Neptune has sworn by Styx—to gods themselves
A dreadful oath—and he will execute
His promise. Thou canst not escape his vengeance.
I loved thee; and, in spite of thine offence,
My heart is troubled by anticipation
For thee. But thou hast earn'd thy doom too well.
Had father ever greater cause for rage?
Just gods, who see the grief that overwhelms me,
Why was I cursed with such a wicked son?

Scene IV.

Phædra, Theseus.

PHÆDRA.—My lord, I come to you, fill'd with just dread.
Your voice raised high in anger reach'd mine ears,
And much I fear that deeds have follow'd threats.
Oh, if there yet is time, spare your own offspring,
Respect your race and blood, I do beseech you.
Let me not hear that blood cry from the ground;
Save me the horror and perpetual pain
Of having caused his father's hand to shed it.

THESEUS.—No, Madam, from that stain my hand is free
But, for all that, the wretch has not escaped me.
The hand of an Immortal now is charged

With his destruction. 'Tis a debt that Neptune
Owes me, and you shall be avenged.

PHÆDRA.— 'A debt
Owed you? Pray'rs made in anger—

THESEUS.— Never fear
That they will fail. Rather join yours to mine.
In all their blackness paint for me his crimes,
And fan my tardy passion to white heat.
But yet you know not all his infamy;
His rage against you overflows in slanders;
Your mouth, he says, is full of all deceit,
He says Aricia has his heart and soul,
That her alone he loves.

PHÆDRA.— Aricia?

THESEUS.— Ay,
He said it to my face: an idle pretext!
A trick that gulls me not! Let us hope Neptune
Will do him speedy justice. To his altars
I go, to urge performance of his oaths.

Scene V.

PHÆDRA [*alone*].—Ah, he is gone! What tidings struck mine ears?
What fire, half smother'd, in my heart revives?
What fatal stroke falls like a thunderbolt?
Stung by remorse that would not let me rest,
I tore myself out of Œnone's arms,
And flew to help Hippolytus with all
My soul and strength. Who knows if that repentance
Might not have moved me to accuse myself?
And, if my voice had not been choked with shame,
Perhaps I had confess'd the frightful truth.
Hippolytus can feel, but not for me!
Aricia has his heart, his plighted troth.
Ye gods, when, deaf to all my sighs and tears,
He arm'd his eye with scorn, his brow with threats,
I deem'd his heart, impregnable to love,
Was fortified 'gainst all my sex alike.
And yet another has prevail'd to tame

His pride, another has secured his favor.
Perhaps he has a heart easily melted;
I am the only one he cannot bear!
And shall I charge myself with his defence?

Scene VI.

Phædra, Œnone.

PHÆDRA.—Know you, dear Nurse, what I have learn'd just now?

ŒNONE.—No; but I come in truth with trembling limbs.
I dreaded with what purpose you went forth,
The fear of fatal madness made me pale.

PHÆDRA.—Who would have thought it, Nurse? I had a rival.

ŒNONE.—A rival?

PHÆDRA.— Yes, he loves. I cannot doubt it.
This wild untamable Hippolytus,
Who scorn'd to be admired, whom lovers' sighs
Wearied, this tiger, whom I fear'd to rouse,
Fawns on a hand that has subdued his pride:
Aricia has found entrance to his heart.

ŒNONE.—Aricia?

PHÆDRA.— Ah! anguish as yet untried!
For what new tortures am I still reserved?
All I have undergone, transports of passion,
Longings and fears, the horrors of remorse,
The shame of being spurn'd with contumely,
Were feeble foretastes of my present torments.
They love each other! By what secret charm
Have they deceived me? Where, and when, and how
Met they? You knew it all. Why was I cozen'd?
You never told me of those stolen hours
Of amorous converse. Have they oft been seen
Talking together? Did they seek the shades
Of thickest woods? Alas! full freedom had they
To see each other. Heav'n approved their sighs;
They loved without the consciousness of guilt;
And every morning's sun for them shone clear,
While I, an outcast from the face of Nature,

Shunn'd the bright day, and sought to hide myself.
Death was the only god whose aid I dared
To ask: I waited for the grave's release.
Water'd with tears, nourish'd with gall, my woe
Was all too closely watch'd; I did not dare
To weep without restraint. In mortal dread
Tasting this dangerous solace, I disguised
My terror 'neath a tranquil countenance,
And oft had I to check my tears, and smile.

ŒNONE.—What fruit will they enjoy of their vain love?
They will not see each other more.

PHÆDRA.— That love
Will last forever. Even while I speak,
Ah, fatal thought, they laugh to scorn the madness
Of my distracted heart. In spite of exile
That soon must part them, with a thousand oaths
They seal yet closer union. Can I suffer
A happiness, Œnone, which insults me?
I crave your pity. She must be destroy'd.
My husband's wrath against a hateful stock
Shall be revived, nor must the punishment
Be light: the sister's guilt passes the brothers'.
I will entreat him in my jealous rage.
What am I saying? Have I lost my senses?
Is Phædra jealous, and will she implore
Theseus for help? My husband lives, and yet
I burn. For whom? Whose heart is this I claim
As mine? At every word I say, my hair
Stands up with horror. Guilt henceforth has pass'd
All bounds. Hypocrisy and incest breathe
At once thro' all. My murderous hands are ready
To spill the blood of guileless innocence.
Do I yet live, wretch that I am, and dare
To face this holy Sun from whom I spring?
My father's sire was king of all the gods;
My ancestors fill all the universe.
Where can I hide? In the dark realms of Pluto?
But there my father holds the fatal urn;
His hand awards th' irrevocable doom:
Minos is judge of all the ghosts in hell.

Ah! how his awful shade will start and shudder
When he shall see his daughter brought before him,
Forced to confess sins of such varied dye,
Crimes it may be unknown to hell itself!
What wilt thou say, my father, at a sight
So dire? I think I see thee drop the urn,
And, seeking some unheard-of punishment,
Thyself become my executioner.
Spare me! A cruel goddess has destroy'd
Thy race; and in my madness recognize
Her wrath. Alas! My aching heart has reap'd
No fruit of pleasure from the frightful crime
The shame of which pursues me to the grave,
And ends in torment life-long misery.

ŒNONE.—Ah, Madam, pray dismiss a groundless dread:
Look less severely on a venial error.
You love. We cannot conquer destiny.
You were drawn on as by a fatal charm.
Is that a marvel without precedent
Among us? Has love triumph'd over you,
And o'er none else? Weakness is natural
To man. A mortal, to a mortal's lot
Submit. You chafe against a yoke that others
Have long since borne. The dwellers in Olympos,
The gods themselves, who terrify with threats
The sins of men, have burn'd with lawless fires.

PHÆDRA.—What words are these I hear? What counsel this
You dare to give me? Will you to the end
Pour poison in mine ears? You have destroy'd me.
You brought me back when I should else have quitted
The light of day, made me forget my duty
And see Hippolytus, till then avoided.
What hast thou done? Why did your wicked mouth
With blackest lies slander his blameless life?
Perhaps you've slain him, and the impious pray'r
Of an unfeeling father has been answer'd.
No, not another word! Go, hateful monster;
Away, and leave me to my piteous fate.
May Heav'n with justice pay you your deserts!
And may your punishment forever be

A terror to all those who would, like you,
Nourish with artful wiles the weaknesses
Of princes, push them to the brink of ruin
To which their heart inclines, and smooth the path
Of guilt. Such flatterers doth the wrath of Heav'n
Bestow on kings as its most fatal gift.

ŒNONE [*alone*].—O gods! to serve her what have I not done?
This is the due reward that I have won.

ACT FIFTH.

Scene I.

Hippolytus, Aricia.

ARICIA.—Can you keep silent in this mortal peril?
Your father loves you. Will you leave him thus
Deceived? If in your cruel heart you scorn
My tears, content to see me nevermore,
Go, part from poor Aricia; but at least,
Going, secure the safety of your life.
Defend your honor from a shameful stain,
And force your father to recall his pray'rs.
There yet is time. Why out of mere caprice
Leave the field free to Phædra's calumnies?
Let Theseus know the truth.

HIPPOLYTUS.— Could I say more,
Without exposing him to dire disgrace?
How should I venture, by revealing all,
To make a father's brow grow red with shame?
The odious mystery to you alone
Is known. My heart has been outpour'd to none
Save you and Heav'n. I could not hide from you
(Judge if I love you), all I fain would hide
E'en from myself. But think under what seal
I spoke. Forget my words, if that may be;
And never let so pure a mouth disclose
This dreadful secret. Let us trust to Heav'n
My vindication, for the gods are just;

For their own honor will they clear the guiltless;
Sooner or later punish'd for her crime,
Phædra will not escape the shame she merits.
I ask no other favor than your silence;
In all besides I give my wrath free scope.
Make your escape from this captivity,
Be bold to bear me company in flight;
Linger not here on this accursèd soil,
Where virtue breathes a pestilential air.
To cover your departure take advantage
Of this confusion, caused by my disgrace.
The means of flight are ready, be assured;
You have as yet no other guards than mine.
Pow'rful defenders will maintain our quarrel;
Argos spreads open arms, and Sparta calls us.
Let us appeal for justice to our friends,
Nor suffer Phædra, in a common ruin
Joining us both, to hunt us from the throne,
And aggrandize her son by robbing us.
Embrace this happy opportunity:
What fear restrains? You seem to hesitate.
Your interest alone prompts me to urge
Boldness. When I am all on fire, how comes it
That you are ice? Fear you to follow then
A banish'd man?

ARICIA.— Ah, dear to me would be
Such exile! With what joy, my fate to yours
United, could I live, by all the world
Forgotten! But not yet has that sweet tie
Bound us together. How then can I steal
Away with you? I know the strictest honor
Forbids me not out of your father's hands
To free myself; this is no parent's home,
And flight is lawful when one flies from tyrants.
But you, Sir, love me; and my virtue shrinks—

HIPPOLYTUS.—No, no, your reputation is to me
As dear as to yourself. A nobler purpose
Brings me to you. Fly from your foes, and follow
A husband. Heav'n, that sends us these misfortunes,
Sets free from human instruments the pledge

Between us. Torches do not always light
The face of Hymen.
At the gates of Trœzen,
'Mid ancient tombs where princes of my race
Lie buried, stands a temple ne'er approach'd
By perjurers, where mortals dare not make
False oaths, for instant punishment befalls
The guilty. Falsehood knows no stronger check
Than what is present there—the fear of death
That cannot be avoided. Thither then
We'll go, if you consent, and swear to love
Forever, take the guardian god to witness
Our solemn vows, and his paternal care
Entreat. I will invoke the name of all
The holiest Pow'rs; chaste Dian, and the Queen
Of Heav'n, yea all the gods who know my heart
Will guarantee my sacred promises.

ARICIA.—The King draws near. Depart—make no delay.
To mask my flight, I linger yet one moment.
Go you; and leave with me some trusty guide,
To lead my timid footsteps to your side.

Scene II.

Theseus, Aricia, Ismene.

THESEUS.—Ye gods, throw light upon my troubled mind,
Show me the truth which I am seeking here.

ARICIA [*aside to Ismene*].—Get ready, dear Ismene, for our flight.

Scene III.

Theseus, Aricia.

THESEUS.—Your color comes and goes, you seem confused,
Madam! What business had my son with you?

ARICIA.—Sire, he was bidding me farewell forever.

THESEUS.—Your eyes, it seems, can tame that stubborn pride;
And the first sighs he breathes are paid to you.

ARICIA.—I can't deny the truth; he has not, Sire,

Inherited your hatred and injustice;
He did not treat me like a criminal.

THESEUS.—That is to say, he swore eternal love.
Do not rely on that inconstant heart;
To others has he sworn as much before.

ARICIA.—He, Sire?

THESEUS.—You ought to check his roving taste
How could you bear a partnership so vile?

ARICIA.—And how can you endure that vilest slanders
Should make a life so pure as black as pitch?
Have you so little knowledge of his heart?
Do you so ill distinguish between guilt
And innocence? What mist before your eyes
Blinds them to virtue so conspicuous?
Ah! 'tis too much to let false tongues defame him.
Repent; call back your murderous wishes, Sire;
Fear, fear lest Heav'n in its severity
Hate you enough to hear and grant your pray'rs.
Oft in their wrath the gods accept our victims,
And oftentimes chastise us with their gifts.

THESEUS.—No, vainly would you cover up his guilt
Your love is blind to his depravity.
But I have witness irreproachable:
Tears have I seen, true tears, that may be trusted.

ARICIA.—Take heed, my lord. Your hands invincible
Have rid the world of monsters numberless;
But all are not destroy'd, one you have left
Alive—your son forbids me to say more.
Knowing with what respect he still regards you,
I should too much distress him if I dared
Complete my sentence. I will imitate
His reverence, and, to keep silence, leave you.

Scene IV.

THESEUS [*alone*].—What is there in her mind? What meaning lurks
In speech begun but to be broken short?
Would both deceive me with a vain pretence?
Have they conspired to put me to the torture?

And yet, despite my stern severity,
What plaintive voice cries deep within my heart?
A secret pity troubles and alarms me.
Œnone shall be questioned once again,
I must have clearer light upon this crime.
Guards, bid Œnone come, and come alone.

Scene V.

Theseus, Panope.

PANOPE.—I know not what the Queen intends to do,
But from her agitation dread the worst.
Fatal despair is painted on her features;
Death's pallor is already in her face.
Œnone, shamed and driven from her sight,
Has cast herself into the ocean depths.
None knows what prompted her to deed so rash;
And now the waves hide her from us forever.
THESEUS.—What say you?
PANOPE.— Her sad fate seems to have added
Fresh trouble to the Queen's tempestuous soul.
Sometimes, to soothe her secret pain, she clasps
Her children close, and bathes them with her tears;
Then suddenly, the mother's love forgotten,
She thrusts them from her with a look of horror.
She wanders to and fro with doubtful steps;
Her vacant eye no longer knows us. Thrice
She wrote, and thrice did she, changing her mind,
Destroy the letter ere 'twas well begun.
Vouchsafe to see her, Sire: vouchsafe to help her.
THESEUS.—Heav'ns! Is Œnone dead, and Phædra bent
On dying too? Oh, call me back my son!
Let him defend himself, and I am ready
To hear him. Be not hasty to bestow
Thy fatal bounty, Neptune; let my pray'rs
Rather remain ever unheard. Too soon
I lifted cruel hands, believing lips
That may have lied! Ah! What despair may follow!

Scene VI.

Theseus, Theramenes.

THESEUS.—Theramenes, is 't thou? Where is my son?
I gave him to thy charge from tenderest childhood.
But whence these tears that overflow thine eyes?
How is it with my son?
THERAMENES.— Concern too late!
Affection vain! Hippolytus is dead.
THESEUS.—Gods!
THERAMENES.— I have seen the flow'r of all mankind
Cut off, and I am bold to say that none
Deserved it less.
THESEUS.— What! My son dead! When I
Was stretching out my arms to him, has Heav'n
Hasten'd his end? What was this sudden stroke?
THERAMENES.—Scarce had we pass'd out of the gates of Trœzen,
He silent in his chariot, and his guards,
Downcast and silent too, around him ranged;
To the Mycenian road he turn'd his steeds,
Then, lost in thought, allow'd the reins to lie
Loose on their backs. His noble chargers, erst
So full of ardor to obey his voice,
With head depress'd and melancholy eye
Seem'd now to mark his sadness and to share it.
A frightful cry, that issues from the deep,
With sudden discord rends the troubled air;
And from the bosom of the earth a groan
Is heard in answer to that voice of terror.
Our blood is frozen at our very hearts;
With bristling manes the list'ning steeds stand still.
Meanwhile upon the watery plain there rises
A mountain billow with a mighty crest
Of foam, that shoreward rolls, and, as it breaks,
Before our eyes vomits a furious monster.
With formidable horns its brow is arm'd,
And all its body clothed with yellow scales,
In front a savage bull, behind a dragon

Turning and twisting in impatient rage.
Its long continued bellowings make the shore
Tremble; the sky seems horror-struck to see it;
The earth with terror quakes; its poisonous breath
Infects the air. The wave that brought it ebbs
In fear. All fly, forgetful of the courage
That cannot aid, and in a neighboring temple
Take refuge—all save bold Hippolytus.
A hero's worthy son, he stays his steeds,
Seizes his darts, and, rushing forward, hurls
A missile with sure aim that wounds the monster
Deep in the flank. With rage and pain it springs
E'en to the horses' feet, and, roaring, falls,
Writhes in the dust, and shows a fiery throat
That covers them with flames, and blood, and smoke.
Fear lends them wings; deaf to his voice for once,
And heedless of the curb, they onward fly.
Their master wastes his strength in efforts vain;
With foam and blood each courser's bit is red.
Some say a god, amid this wild disorder,
Is seen with goads pricking their dusty flanks.
O'er jaggèd rocks they rush urged on by terror;
Crash! goes the axle-tree. Th' intrepid youth
Sees his car broken up, flying to pieces;
He falls himself, entangled in the reins.
Pardon my grief. That cruel spectacle
Will be for me a source of endless tears.
I saw thy hapless son, I saw him, Sire,
Dragg'd by the horses that his hands had fed,
Pow'rless to check their fierce career, his voice
But adding to their fright, his body soon
One mass of wounds. Our cries of anguish fill
The plain. At last they slacken their swift pace,
Then stop, not far from those old tombs that mark
Where lie the ashes of his royal sires.
Panting I thither run, and after me
His guard, along the track stain'd with fresh blood
That reddens all the rocks; caught in the briers
Locks of his hair hang dripping, gory spoils!
I come, I call him. Stretching forth his hand,

He opes his dying eyes, soon closed again.
" The gods have robb'd me of a guiltless life,"
I hear him say: " Take care of sad Aricia
When I am dead. Dear friend, if e'er my father
Mourn, undeceived, his son's unhappy fate
Falsely accused; to give my spirit peace,
Tell him to treat his captive tenderly,
And to restore—" With that the hero's breath
Fails, and a mangled corpse lies in my arms,
A piteous object, trophy of the wrath
Of Heav'n—so changed, his father would not know him.

THESEUS.—Alas, my son! Dear hope forever lost!
The ruthless gods have served me but too well.
For what a life of anguish and remorse
Am I reserved!

THERAMENES.—Aricia at that instant,
Flying from you, comes timidly, to take him
For husband, there, in presence of the gods.
Thus drawing nigh, she sees the grass all red
And reeking, sees (sad sight for lover's eyes!)
Hippolytus stretch'd there, pale and disfigured.
But, for a time doubtful of her misfortune,
Unrecognized the hero she adores,
She looks, and asks—" Where is Hippolytus?"
Only too sure at last that he lies there
Before her, with sad eyes that silently
Reproach the gods, she shudders, groans, and falls,
Swooning and all but lifeless, at his feet.
Ismene, all in tears, kneels down beside her,
And calls her back to life—life that is nought
But sense of pain. And I, to whom this light
Is darkness now, come to discharge the duty
The hero has imposed on me, to tell thee
His last request—a melancholy task.
But hither comes his mortal enemy.

Scene VII.

Theseus, Phædra, Theramenes, Panope, Guards.

THESEUS.—Madam, you've triumph'd, and my son is kill'd!
Ah, but what room have I for fear! How justly
Suspicion racks me that in blaming him
I err'd! But he is dead; accept your victim;
Rightly or wrongly slain, let your heart leap
For joy. My eyes shall be forever blind:
Since you accuse him, I'll believe him guilty.
His death affords me cause enough for tears,
Without a foolish search for further light
Which, pow'rless to restore him to my grief,
Might only serve to make me more unhappy.
Far from this shore and far from you I'll fly,
For here the image of my mangled son
Would haunt my memory and drive me mad.
From the whole world I fain would banish me,
For all the world seems to rise up in judgment
Against me; and my very glory weights
My punishment; for, were my name less known,
'Twere easier to hide me. All the favors
The gods have granted me I mourn and hate,
Nor will I importune them with vain pray'rs
Henceforth forever. Give me what they may,
What they have taken will all else outweigh.

PHÆDRA.—Theseus, I cannot hear you and keep silence:
I must repair the wrong that he has suffer'd—
Your son was innocent.

THESEUS.— Unhappy father!
And it was on your word that I condemn'd him!
Think you such cruelty can be excused—

PHÆDRA.—Moments to me are precious; hear me, Theseus.
'Twas I who cast an eye of lawless passion
On chaste and dutiful Hippolytus.
Heav'n in my bosom kindled baleful fire,
And vile Œnone's cunning did the rest;
She fear'd Hippolytus, knowing my madness,
Would make that passion known which he regarded

With horror; so advantage of my weakness
She took, and hastened to accuse him first.
For that she has been punish'd, tho' too mildly;
Seeking to shun my wrath she cast herself
Beneath the waves. The sword ere now had cut
My thread of life, but slander'd innocence
Made its cry heard, and I resolved to die
In a more lingering way, confessing first
My penitence to you. A poison, brought
To Athens by Medea, runs thro' my veins.
Already in my heart the venom works,
Infusing there a strange and fatal chill;
Already as thro' thickening mists I see
The spouse to whom my presence is an outrage;
Death, from mine eyes veiling the light of heav'n,
Restores its purity that they defiled.

PANOPE.—She dies, my lord!

THESEUS.— Would that the memory
Of her disgraceful deed could perish with her!
Ah, disabused too late! Come, let us go,
And with the blood of mine unhappy son
Mingle our tears, clasping his dear remains,
In deep repentance for a pray'r detested.
Let him be honor'd as he well deserves;
And, to appease his sore offended ghost,
Be her near kinsmen's guilt whate'er it may,
Aricia shall be held my daughter from to-day.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

—

BY

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Sir Charles Marlow and
Young Marlow (his Son).
Hardcastle.
Hastings.
Tony Lumpkin.
Diggory.
Mrs. Hardcastle.
Miss Hardcastle.
Miss Neville.
Maid, Landlords, Servants.

PROLOGUE

By David Garrick, Esq.

EXCUSE me, sirs, I pray—I can't yet speak—
I'm crying now—and have been all the week!
'Tis not alone this mourning suit, good masters;
I've that within—for which there are no plasters!
Pray would you know the reason why I'm crying?
The Comic muse, long sick, is now a-dying!
And if she goes, my tears will never stop;
For as a player, I can't squeeze out one drop:
I am undone, that's all—shall lose my bread—
I'd rather—but that's nothing—lose my head.
When the sweet maid is laid upon the bier,
Shuter and I shall be chief mourners here.
To her a mawkish drab of spurious breed,
Who deals in sentimentals will succeed!
Poor Ned and I are dead to all intents,
We can as soon speak Greek as sentiments!
Both nervous grown, to keep our spirits up,
We now and then take down a hearty cup.
What shall we do?—If Comedy forsake us!
They'll turn us out, and no one else will take us.
But why can't I be moral?—let me try—
My heart thus pressing—fix'd my face and eye—
With a sententious look, that nothing means
(Faces are blocks, in sentimental scenes),
Thus I begin—All is not gold that glitters,
Pleasure seems sweet, but proves a glass of bitters.
When ignorance enters, folly is at hand;
Learning is better far than house and land.
Let not your virtue trip, who trips may stumble,
And virtue is not virtue if she tumble.

I give it up—morals won't do for me;
To make you laugh I must play tragedy.
One hope remains—hearing the maid was ill,
A doctor comes this night to show his skill.
To cheer her heart, and give your muscles motion,
He, in five draughts prepar'd, presents a potion:
A kind of magic charm—for be assur'd,
If you will swallow it, the maid is cur'd.
But desperate the Doctor, and her case is,
If you reject the dose, and make wry faces.
This truth he boasts, will boast it while he lives,
No poisonous drugs are mix'd in what he gives;
Should he succeed, you'll give him his degree;
If not, within he will receive no fee!
The college you, must his pretensions back,
Pronounce him regular, or dub him quack.*

* The lines of the Prologue may be spoken (by any of the male characters) as an introduction to the comedy. The speaker should be dressed in black, and, holding a handkerchief—which is occasionally pressed to the eyes—assume an expression of deep grief and concern.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

ACT FIRST

Scene I.—A Chamber in Hardcastle's old-fashioned House

Enter Mrs. Hardcastle and Mr. Hardcastle.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I vow, Mr. Hardcastle, you're very particular. Is there a creature in the whole country, but ourselves, that does not take a trip to town now and then, to rub off the rust a little? There's the two Miss Hoggs, and our neighbor, Mrs. Grigsby, go to take a month's polishing every winter.

HARDCASTLE. Ay, and bring back vanity and affectation to last them the whole year. I wonder why London cannot keep its own fools at home. In my time, the follies of the town crept slowly among us, but now they travel faster than a stage-coach. Its fopperies come down, not only as inside passengers, but in the very basket.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Ay, your times were fine times indeed; you have been telling us of them for many a long year. Here we live in an old rumbling mansion, that looks for all the world like an inn, but that we never see company. Our best visitors are old Mrs. Oddfish, the curate's wife, and little Cripplegate, the lame dancing-master: and all our entertainment your old stories of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough. I hate such old-fashioned trumpery.

HARDCASTLE. And I love it. I love everything that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine; and, I believe, Dorothy [*taking her hand*], you'll own I have been pretty fond of an old wife.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Lord, Mr. Hardcastle, you're forever at your Dorothys and your old wifes. You may be a Darby, but I'll be no Joan, I promise you. I'm not so old as you'd make me, by more than one good year. Add twenty to twenty, and make money of that.

HARDCASTLE. Let me see; twenty added to twenty, makes just fifty and seven!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. It's false, Mr. Hardcastle: I was but twenty when I was brought to bed of Tony, that I had by Mr. Lumpkin, my first husband; and he's not come to years of discretion yet.

HARDCASTLE. Nor ever will, I dare answer for him. Ay, you have taught *him* finely!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. No matter, Tony Lumpkin has a good fortune. My son is not to live by his learning. I don't think a boy wants much learning to spend fifteen hundred a year.

HARDCASTLE. Learning, quotha! A mere composition of tricks and mischief!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Humor, my dear: nothing but humor. Come, Mr. Hardcastle, you must allow the boy a little humor.

HARDCASTLE. I'd sooner allow him a horse-pond! If burning the footmen's shoes, frightening the maids, and worrying the kittens, be humor, he has it. It was but yesterday he fastened my wig to the back of my chair, and when I went to make a bow, I popped my bald head in Mrs. Frizzle's face!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. And am I to blame? The poor boy was always too sickly to do any good. A school would be his death. When he comes to be a little stronger, who knows what a year or two's Latin may do for him?

HARDCASTLE. Latin for him! A cat and fiddle! No, no, the ale-house and the stable are the only schools he'll ever go to!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Well, we must not snub the poor boy now, for I believe we shan't have him long among us. Anybody that looks in his face may see he's consumptive.

HARDCASTLE. Ay, if growing too fat be one of the symptoms.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. He coughs sometimes.

HARDCASTLE. Yes, when his liquor goes the wrong way.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I'm actually afraid of his lungs.

HARDCASTLE. And truly, so am I; for he sometimes whoops like a speaking-trumpet—[*Tony hallooing behind the scenes*]. O, there he goes—a very consumptive figure, truly!

Enter Tony, crossing the stage.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Tony, where are you going, my charmer? Won't you give papa and I a little of your company, lovey?

TONY. I'm in haste, mother, I cannot stay.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. You shan't venture out this raw evening, my dear: You look most shockingly.

TONY. I can't stay, I tell you. The Three Pigeons expects me down every moment. There's some fun going forward.

HARDCASTLE. Ay; the ale-house, the old place; I thought so.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. A low, paltry set of fellows.

TONY. Not so low, neither. There's Dick Muggins the exciseman, Jack Slang the horse doctor, Little Aminadab that grinds the music box, and Tom Twist that spins the pewter platter.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Pray, my dear, disappoint them for one night, at least.

TONY. As for disappointing them, I should not much mind; but I can't abide to disappoint myself!

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*detaining him*]. You shan't go.

TONY. I will, I tell you.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I say you shan't.

TONY. We'll see which is strongest, you or I.

[*Exit, hauling her out.*

HARDCASTLE. Ay, there goes a pair that only spoil each other. But is not the whole age in a combination to drive sense and discretion out of doors? There's my pretty darling Kate; the fashions of the times have almost infected her too. By living a year or two in town, she is as fond of gauze, and French frippery, as the best of them.

Enter Miss Hardcastle.

HARDCASTLE. Blessings on my pretty innocence! Dressed out as usual, my Kate! Goodness! What a quantity of superfluous silk hast thou got about thee, girl! I could never

teach the fools of this age, that the indigent world could be clothed out of the trimmings of the vain.

MISS HARDCASTLE. You know our agreement, sir. You allow me the morning to receive and pay visits, and to dress in my own manner; and in the evening, I put on my housewife's dress, to please you.

HARDCASTLE. Well, remember, I insist on the terms of our agreement; and, by the bye, I believe I shall have occasion to try your obedience this very evening.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I protest, sir, I don't comprehend your meaning.

HARDCASTLE. Then, to be plain with you, Kate, I expect the young gentleman I have chosen to be your husband from town this very day. I have his father's letter, in which he informs me his son is set out, and that he intends to follow himself shortly after.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Indeed! I wish I had known something of this before. Bless me, how shall I behave? It's a thousand to one I shan't like him; our meeting will be so formal, and so like a thing of business, that I shall find no room for friendship or esteem.

HARDCASTLE. Depend upon it, child, I'll never control your choice; but Mr. Marlow, whom I have pitched upon, is the son of my old friend, Sir Charles Marlow, of whom you have heard me talk so often. The young gentleman has been bred a scholar, and is designed for an employment in the service of his country. I am told he's a man of an excellent understanding.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Is he?

HARDCASTLE. Very generous.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I believe I shall like him.

HARDCASTLE. Young and brave.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I'm sure I shall like him.

HARDCASTLE. And very handsome.

MISS HARDCASTLE. My dear papa, say no more [*kissing his hand*], he's mine, I'll have him!

HARDCASTLE. And, to crown all, Kate, he's one of the most bashful and reserved young fellows in all the world.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Eh! you have frozen me to death again. That word reserved has undone all the rest of his accom-

plishments. A reserved lover, it is said, always makes a suspicious husband.

HARDCASTLE. On the contrary, modesty seldom resides in a breast that is not enriched with nobler virtues. It was the very feature in his character that first struck me.

MISS HARDCASTLE. He must have more striking features to catch me, I promise you. However, if he be so young, so handsome, and so everything, as you mention, I believe he'll do still. I think I'll have him.

HARDCASTLE. Ay, Kate, but there is still an obstacle. It is more than an even wager, he may not have *you*.

MISS HARDCASTLE. My dear papa, why will you mortify one so?—Well, if he refuses, instead of breaking my heart at his indifference, I'll only break my glass for its flattery, set my cap to some newer fashion, and look out for some less difficult admirer.

HARDCASTLE. Bravely resolved! In the meantime I'll go prepare the servants for his reception; as we seldom see company, they want as much training as a company of recruits the first day's muster. [*Exit.*

MISS HARDCASTLE. Lud, this news of papa's puts me all in a flutter. Young, handsome; these he put last; but I put them foremost. Sensible, good-natur'd; I like all that. But then, reserved and sheepish, that's much against him. Yet can't he be cured of his timidity, by being taught to be proud of his wife? Yes, and can't I—But I vow I'm disposing of the husband before I have secured the lover!

Enter Miss Neville.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I'm glad you're come, Neville, my dear. Tell me, Constance, how do I look this evening? Is there anything whimsical about me? Is it one of my well-looking days, child? Am I in face to-day?

MISS NEVILLE. Perfectly, my dear. Yet, now I look again—bless me!—sure no accident has happened among the canary birds or the goldfishes? Has your brother or the cat been meddling? Or has the last novel been too moving?

MISS HARDCASTLE. No; nothing of all this. I have been

threatened—I can scarce get it out—I have been threatened with a lover!

MISS NEVILLE. And his name——

MISS HARDCASTLE. Is Marlow.

MISS NEVILLE. Indeed!

MISS HARDCASTLE. The son of Sir Charles Marlow.

MISS NEVILLE. As I live, the most intimate friend of Mr. Hastings, my admirer. They are never asunder. I believe you must have seen him when we lived in town.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Never.

MISS NEVILLE. He's a very singular character, I assure you. Among women of reputation and virtue, he is the modestest man alive; but his acquaintance give him a very different character among creatures of another stamp: you understand me?

MISS HARDCASTLE. An odd character, indeed! I shall never be able to manage him. What shall I do? Pshaw, think no more of him, but trust to occurrences for success. But how goes on your own affair, my dear? Has my mother been courting you for my brother Tony, as usual?

MISS NEVILLE. I have just come from one of our agreeable *tête-à-têtes.* She has been saying a hundred tender things, and setting off her pretty monster as the very pink of perfection.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And her partiality is such, that she actually thinks him so. A fortune like yours is no small temptation. Besides, as she has the sole management of it, I'm not surprised to see her unwilling to let it go out of the family.

MISS NEVILLE. A fortune like mine, which chiefly consists in jewels, is no such mighty temptation. But, at any rate, if my dear Hastings be but constant, I make no doubt to be too hard for her at last. However, I let her suppose that I am in love with her son, and she never once dreams that my affections are fixed upon another.

MISS HARDCASTLE. My good brother holds out stoutly. I could almost love him for hating you so.

MISS NEVILLE. It is a good-natur'd creature at bottom, and I'm sure would wish to see me married to anybody but himself. But my aunt's bell rings for our afternoon's walk through

the improvements. *Allons.* Courage is necessary, as our affairs are critical.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Would it were bedtime and all were well. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II.—An Ale-house Room

Several shabby fellows, with punch and tobacco. Tony at the head of the table, a little higher than the rest: a mallet in his hand.

OMNES. Hurrea, hurrea, hurrea, bravo!

FIRST FELLOW. Now, gentlemen, silence for a song. The 'Squire is going to knock himself down for a song.

OMNES. Ay, a song, a song.

TONY. Then I'll sing you, gentlemen, a song I made upon this ale-house, the Three Pigeons.

SONG.

Let school-masters puzzle their brain,
With grammar, and nonsense, and learning;
Good liquor, I stoutly maintain,
Gives *genus* a better discerning;
Let them brag of their heathenish Gods,
Their Lethes, their Styxes, and Stygians;
Their Quis, and their Quæs, and their Quods,
They're all but a parcel of Pigeons.
Toroddle, toroddle, toroll!

When Methodist preachers come down,
A-preaching that drinking is sinful,
I'll wager the rascals a crown,
They always preach best with a skinful.
But when you come down with your pence,
For a slice of their scurvy religion,
I'll leave it to all men of sense,
But you, my good friend, are the pigeon.
Toroddle, toroddle, toroll!

Then come, put the jorum about,
And let us be merry and clever,
Our hearts and our liquors are stout,
Here's the Three Jolly Pigeons for ever.

Let some cry up woodcock or hare,
Your bustards, your ducks, and your widgeons;
But of all the birds in the air,
Here's a health to the Three Jolly Pigeons.
Toroddle, toroddle, toroll!

OMNES. Bravo, bravo!

FIRST FELLOW. The 'Squire has got spunk in him.

SECOND FELLOW. I loves to hear him sing, bekeays he never gives us nothing that's low.

THIRD FELLOW. O d—n anything that's low, I cannot bear it!

FOURTH FELLOW. The genteel thing is the genteel thing at any time. If so be that a gentleman bees in a concatenation accordingly.

THIRD FELLOW. I like the maxum of it, Master Muggins. What, though I am obligated to dance a bear, a man may be a gentleman for all that. May this be my poison if my bear ever dances but to the very genteelest of tunes—"Water Parted," or the minuet in "Ariadne."

SECOND FELLOW. What a pity it is the 'Squire is not come to his own. It would be well for all the publicans within ten miles round of him.

TONY. Ecod, and so it would, Master Slang. I'd then show what it was to keep choice of company.

SECOND FELLOW. O, he takes after his own father for that. To be sure, old 'Squire Lumpkin was the finest gentleman I ever set my eyes on. For winding the straight horn, or beating a thicket for a hare or a wench, he never had his fellow. It was a saying in the place, that he kept the best horses, dogs, and girls in the whole country.

TONY. Ecod, and when I'm of age I'll be no bastard, I promise you. I have been thinking of Bet Bouncer and the miller's gray mare to begin with. But come, my boys, drink about and be merry, for you pay no reckoning. Well, Stingo, what's the matter?

Enter Landlord.

LANDLORD. There be two gentlemen in a post-chaise at the door. They have lost their way upo' the forest; and they are talking something about Mr. Hardcastle.

DAVID GARRICK.

Photogravure from an etching.

This is a striking picture of David Garrick, one of the greatest—perhaps the very greatest—of English actors. The eyes, large and expressive, are a wonderful feature, showing in their dark depths the actor's inherent tragic powers. The lower part of the face rather betrays his unbounded stomach for flattery, and the closely compressed lips show the business prudence, thanks to which Garrick died a rich man.

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TONY. As sure as can be, one of them must be the gentleman that's coming down to court my sister. Do they seem to be Londoners?

LANDLORD. I believe they may. They look woundily like Frenchmen.

TONY. Then desire them to step this way, and I'll set them right in a twinkling. [*Exit Landlord.*] Gentlemen, as they mayn't be good enough company for you, step down for a moment, and I'll be with you in the squeezing of a lemon. [*Exeunt mob.*

TONY. Father-in-law has been calling me whelp, and hound, this half year. Now, if I pleased, I could be so revenged upon the old grumbletonian. But then I'm afraid—afraid of what? I shall soon be worth fifteen hundred a year, and let him frighten me out of that if he can!

Enter Landlord, conducting Marlow and Hastings.

MARLOW. What a tedious uncomfortable day have we had of it! We were told it was but forty miles across the country, and we have come above threescore!

HASTINGS. And all, Marlow, from that unaccountable reserve of yours, that would not let us inquire more frequently on the way.

MARLOW. I own, Hastings, I am unwilling to lay myself under an obligation to every one I meet; and often stand the chance of an unmannerly answer.

HASTINGS. At present, however, we are not likely to receive any answer.

TONY. No offence, gentlemen. But I'm told you have been inquiring for one Mr. Hardcastle, in these parts. Do you know what part of the country you are in?

HASTINGS. Not in the least, sir, but should thank you for information.

TONY. Nor the way you came?

HASTINGS. No, sir, but if you can inform us——

TONY. Why, gentlemen, if you know neither the road you are going, nor where you are, nor the road you came, the first thing I have to inform you is, that—you have lost your way.

MARLOW. We wanted no ghost to tell us that.

TONY. Pray, gentlemen, may I be so bold as to ask the place from whence you came?

MARLOW. That's not necessary towards directing us where we are to go.

TONY. No offence; but question for question is all fair, you know. Pray, gentlemen, is not this same Hardcastle a cross-grained, old-fashioned, whimsical fellow with an ugly face, a daughter, and a pretty son?

HASTINGS. We have not seen the gentleman, but he has the family you mention.

TONY. The daughter, a tall, trapesing, trolloping, talkative maypole—the son, a pretty, well-bred, agreeable youth, that everybody is fond of!

MARLOW. Our information differs in this. The daughter is said to be well-bred and beautiful; the son, an awkward booby, reared up and spoiled at his mother's apron-string.

TONY. He-he-hem—then, gentlemen, all I have to tell you is, that you won't reach Mr. Hardcastle's house this night, I believe.

HASTINGS. Unfortunate!

TONY. It's a d——d long, dark, boggy, dirty, dangerous way. Stingo, tell the gentlemen the way to Mr. Hardcastle's. [*Winking upon the Landlord.*] Mr. Hardcastle's of Quagmire Marsh, you understand me.

LANDLORD. Master Hardcastle's! Lack-a-daisy, my masters, you've come a deadly deal wrong! When you came to the bottom of the hill, you should have crossed down Squash Lane.

MARLOW. Cross down Squash Lane!

LANDLORD. Then you were to keep straight forward, until you came to four roads.

MARLOW. Come to where four roads meet!

TONY. Ay, but you must be sure to take only one of them.

MARLOW. O, sir, you're facetious!

TONY. Then, keeping to the right, you are to go sideways till you come upon Crackskull common: there you must look sharp for the track of the wheel, and go forward, till you come to farmer Murrain's barn. Coming to the farmer's

barn, you are to turn to the right, and then to the left, and then to the right about again, till you find out the old mill——

MARLOW. Zounds, man! we could as soon find out the longitude!

HASTINGS. What's to be done, Marlow?

MARLOW. This house promises but a poor reception, though, perhaps, the landlord can accommodate us.

LANDLORD. Alack, master, we have but one spare bed in the whole house.

TONY. And to my knowledge, that's taken up by three lodgers already. [*After a pause, in which the rest seem disconcerted.*] I have hit it. Don't you think, Stingo, our landlady could accommodate the gentlemen by the fireside, with three chairs and a bolster?

HASTINGS. I hate sleeping by the fireside.

MARLOW. And I detest your three chairs and a bolster.

TONY. You do, do you?—then let me see—what—if you go on a mile further, to the Buck's Head; the old Buck's Head on the hill, one of the best inns in the whole county?

HASTINGS. Oh, oh! so we have escaped an adventure for this night, however.

LANDLORD [*apart to Tony*]. Sure, you ben't sending them to your father's as an inn, be you?

TONY. Mum, you fool, you. Let *them* find that out. [*To them.*] You have only to keep on straight forward, till you come to a large old house by the roadside. You'll see a pair of large horns over the door. That's the sign. Drive up the yard, and call stoutly about you.

HASTINGS. Sir, we are obliged to you. The servants can't miss the way?

TONY. No, no: But I tell you though, the landlord is rich, and going to leave off business; so he wants to be thought a gentleman, saving your presence, he! he! he! He'll be for giving you his company, and, ecod, if you mind him he'll persuade you that his mother was an alderman, and his aunt a justice of the peace!

LANDLORD. A troublesome old blade, to be sure; but 'a keeps as good wines and beds as any in the whole country.

MARLOW. Well, if he supplies us with these, we shall want no further connection. We are to turn to the right, did you say?

TONY. No, no; straight forward. I'll just step myself, and show you a piece of the way. [*To the Landlord.*] Mum.

LANDLORD. Ah, bless your heart, for a sweet, pleasant—d——d mischievous son. [*Exeunt.*

ACT SECOND

Scene—A Room in Hardcastle's House

Enter Hardcastle, followed by three or four awkward servants.

HARDCASTLE. Well, I hope you're perfect in the table exercise I have been teaching you these three days. You all know your posts and your places, and can show that you have been used to good company, without ever stirring from home.

OMNES. Ay, ay.

HARDCASTLE. When company comes, you are not to pop out and stare, and then run in again, like frightened rabbits in a warren.

OMNES. No, no.

HARDCASTLE. You, Diggory, whom I have taken from the barn, are to make a show at the side-table; and you, Roger, whom I have advanced from the plough, are to place yourself behind *my* chair. But you're not to stand so, with your hands in your pockets. Take your hands from your pockets, Roger; and from your head, you blockhead, you. See how Diggory carries his hands. They're a little too stiff, indeed, but that's no great matter.

DIGGORY. Ay, mind how I hold them. I learned to hold my hands this way, when I was upon drill for the militia. And so being upon drill——

HARDCASTLE. You must not be so talkative, Diggory. You must be all attention to the guests. You must hear us talk, and not think of talking; you must see us drink, and not

think of drinking; you must see us eat, and not think of eating.

DIGGORY. By the laws, your worship, that's parfectly unpossible. Whenever Diggory sees yeating going forward, ecod, he's always wishing for a mouthful himself.

HARDCASTLE. Blockhead! Is not a bellyful in the kitchen as good as a bellyful in the parlor? Stay your stomach with that reflection.

DIGGORY. Ecod, I thank your worship, I'll make a shift to stay my stomach with a slice of cold beef in the pantry.

HARDCASTLE. Diggory, you are too talkative. Then, if I happen to say a good thing, or tell a good story at table, you must not all burst out a-laughing, as if you made part of the company.

DIGGORY. Then, ecod, your worship must not tell the story of Ould Grouse in the gun-room: I can't help laughing at that—he! he! he!—for the soul of me! We have laughed at that these twenty years—ha! ha! ha!

HARDCASTLE. Ha! ha! ha! The story is a good one. Well, honest Diggory, you may laugh at that—but still remember to be attentive. Suppose one of the company should call for a glass of wine, how will you behave? A glass of wine, sir, if you please [*to Diggory*]. Eh, why don't you move?

DIGGORY. Ecod, your worship, I never have courage till I see the eatables and drinkables brought upo' the table, and then I'm as bauld as a lion.

HARDCASTLE. What, will nobody move?

FIRST SERVANT. I'm not to leave this pleace.

SECOND SERVANT. I'm sure it's no pleace of mine.

THIRD SERVANT. Nor mine, for sartain.

DIGGORY. Wauns, and I'm sure it canna be mine.

HARDCASTLE. You numskulls! and so while, like your betters, you are quarrelling for places, the guests must be starved. O, you dunces! I find I must begin all over again. But don't I hear a coach drive into the yard? To your posts, you blockheads! I'll go in the meantime and give my old friend's son a hearty reception at the gate.

[*Exit Hardcastle.*

DIGGORY. By the elevens, my pleace is gone quite out of my head!

ROGER. I know that my pleace is to be everywhere!

FIRST SERVANT. Where the devil is mine?

SECOND SERVANT. My pleace is to be nowhere at all; and so Ize go about my business!

[*Exeunt servants, running about as if frighted, different ways.*

Enter Servant with candles, showing in Marlow and Hastings.

SERVANT. Welcome, gentlemen, very welcome. This way.

HASTINGS. After the disappointments of the day, welcome once more, Charles, to the comforts of a clean room and a good fire. Upon my word, a very well-looking house; antique, but creditable.

MARLOW. The usual fate of a large mansion. Having first ruined the master by good house-keeping, it at last comes to levy contributions as an inn.

HASTINGS. As you say, we passengers are to be taxed to pay all these fineries. I have often seen a good sideboard, or a marble chimney-piece, though not actually put in the bill, inflame a reckoning confoundedly.

MARLOW. Travellers, George, must pay in all places. The only difference is, that in good inns, you pay dearly for luxuries; in bad inns, you are fleeced and starved.

HASTINGS. You have lived pretty much among them. In truth, I have been often surprised, that you who have seen so much of the world, with your natural good sense, and your many opportunities, could never yet acquire a requisite share of assurance.

MARLOW. The Englishman's malady. But tell me, George, where could I have learned that assurance you talk of? My life has been chiefly spent in a college, or an inn, in seclusion from that lovely part of the creation that chiefly teach men confidence. I don't know that I was ever familiarly acquainted with a single modest woman—except my mother—But among females of another class, you know——

HASTINGS. Ay, among them you are impudent enough of all conscience!

MARLOW. They are of *us*, you know.

HASTINGS. But in the company of women of reputation I never saw such an idiot, such a trembler; you look for all the world as if you wanted an opportunity of stealing out of the room.

MARLOW. Why, man, that's because I *do* want to steal out of the room. Faith, I have often formed a resolution to break the ice, and rattle away at any rate. But I don't know how, a single glance from a pair of fine eyes has totally overset my resolution. An impudent fellow may counterfeit modesty, but I'll be hanged if a modest man can ever counterfeit impudence.

HASTINGS. If you could but say half the fine things to them that I have heard you lavish upon the barmaid of an inn, or even a college bedmaker——

MARLOW. Why, George, I can't say fine things to them. They freeze, they petrify me. They may talk of a comet, or a burning mountain or some such bagatelle. But to me, a modest woman, dressed out in all her finery, is the most tremendous object of the whole creation.

HASTINGS. Ha! ha! ha! At this rate, man, how can you ever expect to marry?

MARLOW. Never, unless, as among kings and princes, my bride were to be courted by proxy. If, indeed, like an Eastern bridegroom, one were to be introduced to a wife he never saw before, it might be endured. But to go through all the terrors of a formal courtship, together with the episode of aunts, grandmothers, and cousins, and at last to blurt out the broad staring question of, *Madam, will you marry me?* No, no, that's a strain much above me, I assure you!

HASTINGS. I pity you. But how do you intend behaving to the lady you are come down to visit at the request of your father?

MARLOW. As I behave to all other ladies. Bow very low. Answer yes, or no, to all her demands—But for the rest, I don't think I shall venture to look in her face, till I see my father's again.

HASTINGS. I'm surprised that one who is so warm a friend can be so cool a lover.

MARLOW. To be explicit, my dear Hastings, my chief induce-

ment down was to be instrumental in forwarding your happiness, not my own. Miss Neville loves you, the family don't know you, as my friend you are sure of a reception, and let honor do the rest.

HASTINGS. My dear Marlow! But I'll suppress the emotion. Were I a wretch, meanly seeking to carry off a fortune, you should be the last man in the world I would apply to for assistance. But Miss Neville's person is all I ask, and that is mine, both from her deceased father's consent, and her own inclination.

MARLOW. Happy man! You have talents and art to captivate any woman. I'm doomed to adore the sex, and yet to converse with the only part of it I despise. This stammer in my address, and this awkward prepossessing visage of mine, can never permit me to soar above the reach of a milliner's apprentice, or one of the duchesses of Drury Lane. Pshaw! this fellow here to interrupt us.

Enter Hardcastle.

HARDCASTLE. Gentlemen, once more you are heartily welcome. Which is Mr. Marlow? Sir, you're heartily welcome. It's not my way, you see, to receive my friends with my back to the fire. I like to give them a hearty reception in the old style at my gate. I like to see their horses and trunks taken care of.

MARLOW [*aside*]. He has got our names from the servants already. [*To him.*] We approve your caution and hospitality, sir. [*To Hastings.*] I have been thinking, George, of changing our travelling dresses in the morning. I am grown confoundedly ashamed of mine.

HARDCASTLE. I beg, Mr. Marlow, you'll use no ceremony in this house.

HASTINGS. I fancy, George, you're right; the first blow is half the battle. I intend opening the campaign with the white and gold.

HARDCASTLE. Mr. Marlow—Mr. Hastings—gentlemen—pray be under no constraint in this house. This is Liberty Hall, gentlemen. You may do just as you please here.

MARLOW. Yet, George, if we open the campaign too fiercely

at first, we may want ammunition before it is over. I think to reserve the embroidery to secure a retreat.

HARDCASTLE. Your talking of a retreat, Mr. Marlow, puts me in mind of the Duke of Marlborough, when we went to besiege Denain. He first summoned the garrison——

MARLOW. Don't you think the *ventre d'or* waistcoat will do with the plain brown?

HARDCASTLE. He first summoned the garrison, which might consist of about five thousand men——

HASTINGS. I think not: brown and yellow mix but very poorly.

HARDCASTLE. I say, gentlemen, as I was telling you, he summoned the garrison, which might consist of about five thousand men——

MARLOW. The girls like finery.

HARDCASTLE. Which might consist of about five thousand men, well appointed with stores, ammunition, and other implements of war. "Now," says the Duke of Marlborough to George Brooks, that stood next to him—you must have heard of George Brooks—"I'll pawn my Dukedom," says he, "but I take that garrison without spilling a drop of blood!" So——

MARLOW. What, my good friend, if you gave us a glass of punch in the meantime? it would help us to carry on the siege with vigor.

HARDCASTLE. Punch, sir!—[*Aside.*] This is the most unaccountable kind of modesty I ever met with!

MARLOW. Yes, sir, punch! A glass of warm punch, after our journey, will be comfortable. This is Liberty Hall, you know.

HARDCASTLE. Here's cup, sir.

MARLOW [*aside*]. So this fellow, in his Liberty Hall, will only let us have just what he pleases.

HARDCASTLE [*taking the cup*]. I hope you'll find it to your mind. I have prepared it with my own hands, and I believe you'll own the ingredients are tolerable. Will you be so good as to pledge me, sir? Here, Mr. Marlow, here is to our better acquaintance! [*Drinks.*

MARLOW [*aside*]. A very impudent fellow this! but he's a character, and I'll humor him a little. Sir, my service to you. [*Drinks.*

HASTINGS [*aside*]. I see this fellow wants to give us his company, and forgets that he's an innkeeper, before he has learned to be a gentleman.

MARLOW. From the excellence of your cup, my old friend, I suppose you have a good deal of business in this part of the country. Warm work, now and then, at elections, I suppose?

HARDCASTLE. No, sir, I have long given that work over. Since our betters have hit upon the expedient of electing each other, there's no business for us that sell ale.

HASTINGS. So, then you have no turn for politics, I find?

HARDCASTLE. Not in the least. There was a time, indeed, I fretted myself about the mistakes of government, like other people; but, finding myself every day grow more angry, and the government growing no better, I left it to mend itself. Since that, I no more trouble my head about *Heyder Ally,* or *Ally Cawn,* than about *Ally Croaker.* Sir, my service to you.

HASTINGS. So that, with eating above stairs, and drinking below, with receiving your friends within, and amusing them without, you lead a good pleasant bustling life of it.

HARDCASTLE. I do stir about a great deal, that's certain. Half the differences of the parish are adjusted in this very parlor.

MARLOW [*after drinking*]. And you have an argument in your cup, old gentleman, better than any in Westminster Hall.

HARDCASTLE. Ay, young gentleman, that, and a little philosophy.

MARLOW [*aside*]. Well, this is the first time I ever heard of an innkeeper's philosophy.

HASTINGS. So then, like an experienced general, you attack them on every quarter. If you find their reason manageable, you attack it with your philosophy; if you find they have no reason, you attack them with this. Here's your health, my philosopher. [*Drinks.*

HARDCASTLE. Good, very good, thank you; ha! ha! Your generalship puts me in mind of Prince Eugene, when he fought the Turks at the battle of Belgrade. You shall hear.

MARLOW. Instead of the battle of Belgrade, I believe it's almost time to talk about supper. What has your philosophy got in the house for supper?

HARDCASTLE. For supper, sir.—— [*Aside.*] Was ever such a request to a man in his own house!

MARLOW. Yes, sir, supper, sir; I begin to feel an appetite. I shall make devilish work to-night in the larder, I promise you.

HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. Such a brazen dog sure never my eyes beheld. [*To him.*] Why, really, sir, as for supper I can't well tell. My Dorothy, and the cook maid, settle these things between them. I leave these kind of things entirely to them.

MARLOW. You do, do you?

HARDCASTLE. Entirely. By-the-bye, I believe they are in actual consultation upon what's for supper this moment in the kitchen.

MARLOW. Then I beg they'll admit *me* as one of their privy counsel. It's a way I have got. When I travel, I always choose to regulate my own supper. Let the cook be called. No offence, I hope, sir?

HARDCASTLE. O no, sir, none in the least; yet, I don't know how: our Bridget, the cook maid, is not very communicative upon these occasions. Should we send for her, she might scold us all out of the house.

HASTINGS. Let's see your list of the larder, then. I ask it as a favor. I always match my appetite to my bill of fare.

MARLOW [*to Hardcastle, who looks at them with surprise*]. Sir, he's very right, and it's my way, too.

HARDCASTLE. Sir, you have a right to command here. Here, Roger, bring us the bill of fare for to-night's supper. I believe it's drawn out. Your manner, Mr. Hastings, puts me in mind of my uncle, Colonel Wallop. It was a saying of his, that no man was sure of his supper till he had eaten it.

HASTINGS [*aside*]. All upon the high ropes! His uncle a colonel! We shall soon hear of his mother being a justice of peace. But let's hear the bill of fare.

MARLOW [*perusing*]. What's here? For the first course; for the second course; for the dessert. The devil, sir, do you think we have brought down the whole Joiners' Company, or the Corporation of Bedford, to eat up such a supper? Two or three little things, clean and comfortable, will do.

HASTINGS. But let's hear it.

MARLOW [*reading*]. For the first course at the top, a pig, and prune sauce.

HASTINGS. D—n your pig, I say!

MARLOW. And d—n your prune sauce, say I!

HARDCASTLE. And yet, gentlemen, to men that are hungry, pig, with prune sauce, is very good eating.

MARLOW. At the bottom, a calf's tongue and brains.

HASTINGS. Let your brains be knocked out, my good sir; I don't like them.

MARLOW. Or you may clap them on a plate by themselves, I do.

HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. Their impudence confounds me. [*To them.*] Gentlemen, you are my guests, make what alterations you please. Is there anything else you wish to retrench or alter, gentlemen?

MARLOW. Item. A pork pie, a boiled rabbit and sausages, a florentine, a shaking pudding, and a dish of tiff—taff—taffety cream!

HASTINGS. Confound your made dishes, I shall be as much at a loss in this house as at a green and yellow dinner at the French ambassador's table. I'm for plain eating.

HARDCASTLE. I'm sorry, gentlemen, that I have nothing you like, but if there be anything you have a particular fancy to——

MARLOW. Why, really, sir, your bill of fare is so exquisite, that any one part of it is full as good as another. Send us what you please. So much for supper. And now to see that our beds are aired, and properly taken care of.

HARDCASTLE. I entreat you'll leave all that to me. You shall not stir a step.

MARLOW. Leave that to you! I protest, sir, you must excuse me, I always look to these things myself.

HARDCASTLE. I must insist, sir, you'll make yourself easy on that head.

MARLOW. You see I'm resolved on it. [*Aside.*] A very troublesome fellow this, as ever I met with.

HARDCASTLE. Well, sir, I'm resolved at least to attend you.—[*Aside.*] This may be modern modesty, but I never saw anything look so like old-fashioned impudence.

[*Exeunt Marlow and Hardcastle.*

HASTINGS. So I find this fellow's civilities begin to grow troub-

lesome. But who can be angry at those assiduities which are meant to please him? Ha! what do I see? Miss Neville, by all that's happy!

Enter Miss Neville.

MISS NEVILLE. My dear Hastings! To what unexpected good fortune—to what accident am I to ascribe this happy meeting?

HASTINGS. Rather let me ask the same question, as I could never have hoped to meet my dearest Constance at an inn.

MISS NEVILLE. An inn! sure you mistake! my aunt, my guardian, lives here. What could induce you to think this house an inn?

HASTINGS. My friend, Mr. Marlow, with whom I came down, and I, have been sent here as to an inn, I assure you. A young fellow whom we accidentally met at a house hard by directed us hither.

MISS NEVILLE. Certainly it must be one of my hopeful cousin's tricks, of whom you have heard me talk so often, ha! ha! ha! ha!

HASTINGS. He whom your aunt intends for you? He of whom I have such just apprehensions?

MISS NEVILLE. You have nothing to fear from him, I assure you. You'd adore him if you knew how heartily he despises me. My aunt knows it too, and has undertaken to court me for him, and actually begins to think she has made a conquest.

HASTINGS. Thou dear dissembler! You must know, my Constance, I have just seized this happy opportunity of my friend's visit here to get admittance into the family. The horses that carried us down are now fatigued with their journey, but they'll soon be refreshed; and then, if my dearest girl will trust in her faithful Hastings, we shall soon be landed in France, where even among slaves the laws of marriage are respected.

MISS NEVILLE. I have often told you, that though ready to obey you, I yet should leave my little fortune behind with reluctance. The greatest part of it was left me by my uncle, the India Director, and chiefly consists in jewels. I have

been for some time persuading my aunt to let me wear them. I fancy I'm very near succeeding. The instant they are put into my possession you shall find me ready to make them and myself yours.

HASTINGS. Perish the baubles! Your person is all I desire. In the meantime, my friend Marlow must not be let into his mistake. I know the strange reserve of his temper is such, that if abruptly informed of it, he would instantly quit the house before our plan was ripe for execution.

MISS NEVILLE. But how shall we keep him in the deception? Miss Hardcastle is just returned from walking; what if we still continue to deceive him?—This, this way——

[*They confer.*

Enter Marlow.

MARLOW. The assiduities of these good people tease me beyond bearing. My host seems to think it ill manners to leave me alone, and so he claps not only himself, but his old-fashioned wife on my back. They talk of coming to sup with us, too; and then, I suppose we are to run the gauntlet through all the rest of the family. What have we got here?——

HASTINGS. My dear Charles! Let me congratulate you!—The most fortunate accident!—Who do you think is just alighted?

MARLOW. Cannot guess.

HASTINGS. Our mistresses, boy, Miss Hardcastle and Miss Neville. Give me leave to introduce Miss Constance Neville to your acquaintance. Happening to dine in the neighborhood, they called, on their return, to take fresh horses here. Miss Hardcastle has just stept into the next room, and will be back in an instant. Wasn't it lucky? eh!

MARLOW [*aside*]. I have just been mortified enough of all conscience, and here comes something to complete my embarrassment.

HASTINGS. Well! but wasn't it the most fortunate thing in the world?

MARLOW. Oh! yes. Very fortunate—a most joyful encounter—But our dresses, George, you know, are in disorder—What if we should postpone the happiness till to-morrow?

—To-morrow at her own house—It will be every bit as convenient—And rather more respectful—To-morrow let it be. [*Offering to go.*

MISS NEVILLE. By no means, sir. Your ceremony will displease her. The disorder of your dress will show the ardor of your impatience. Besides, she knows you are in the house, and will permit you to see her.

MARLOW. O! the devil! how shall I support it? Hem! hem! Hastings, you must not go. You are to assist me, you know. I shall be confoundedly ridiculous. Yet, hang it! I'll take courage. Hem!

HASTINGS. Pshaw, man! it's but the first plunge, and all's over. She's but a woman, you know.

MARLOW. And of all women, she that I dread most to encounter!

Enter Miss Hardcastle, as returned from walking, wearing a bonnet.

HASTINGS [*introducing them*]. Miss Hardcastle, Mr. Marlow, I'm proud of bringing two persons of such merit together, that only want to know, to esteem each other.

MISS HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. Now, for meeting my modest gentleman with a demure face, and quite in his own manner. [*After a pause, in which he appears very uneasy and disconcerted.*] I'm glad of your safe arrival, sir—I'm told you had some accidents by the way.

MARLOW. Only a few, madam. Yes, we had some. Yes, madam, a good many accidents, but should be sorry—madam—or rather glad of any accidents—that are so agreeably concluded. Hem!

HASTINGS [*to him*]. You never spoke better in your whole life. Keep it up, and I'll insure you the victory.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I'm afraid you flatter, sir. You that have seen so much of the finest company can find little entertainment in an obscure corner of the country.

MARLOW [*gathering courage*]. I have lived, indeed, in the world, madam; but I have kept very little company. I have been but an observer upon life, madam, while others were enjoying it.

MISS NEVILLE. But that, I am told, is the way to enjoy it at last.

HASTINGS [*to him*]. Cicero never spoke better. Once more, and you are confirmed in assurance forever.

MARLOW [*to him*]. Hem! Stand by me, then, and when I'm down, throw in a word or two to set me up again.

MISS HARDCASTLE. An observer, like you, upon life, were, I fear, disagreeably employed, since you must have had much more to censure than to approve.

MARLOW. Pardon me, madam. I was always willing to be amused. The folly of most people is rather an object of mirth than uneasiness.

HASTINGS [*to him*]. Bravo, bravo. Never spoke so well in your whole life. Well, Miss Hardcastle, I see that you and Mr. Marlow are going to be very good company. I believe our being here will but embarrass the interview.

MARLOW. Not in the least, Mr. Hastings. We like your company of all things. [*To him.*] Zounds! George, sure you won't go? How can you leave us?

HASTINGS. Our presence will but spoil conversation, so we'll retire to the next room. [*To him.*] You don't consider, man, that we are to manage a little *tête-à-tête* of our own.

[*Exeunt.*

MISS HARDCASTLE [*after a pause*]. But you have not been wholly an observer, I presume, sir. The ladies, I should hope, have employed some part of your addresses.

MARLOW [*relapsing into timidity*]. Pardon me, madam, I—I—I—as yet have studied—only—to—deserve them.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And that some say is the very worst way to obtain them.

MARLOW. Perhaps so, madam. But I love to converse only with the more grave and sensible part of the sex. But I'm afraid I grow tiresome.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Not at all, sir; there is nothing I like so much as grave conversation myself: I could hear it forever. Indeed, I have often been surprised how a man of sentiment could ever admire those light airy pleasures, where nothing reaches the heart.

MARLOW. It's—a disease—of the mind, madam. In the variety of tastes there must be some who, wanting a relish for—um-a-um——

MISS HARDCASTLE. I understand you, sir. There must be some,

who, wanting a relish for refined pleasures, pretend to despise what they are incapable of tasting.

MARLOW. My meaning, madam, but infinitely better expressed. And I can't help observing—a——

MISS HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. Who could ever suppose this fellow impudent upon some occasions? [*To him.*] You were going to observe, sir——

MARLOW. I was observing, madam—I protest, madam, I forget what I was going to observe.

MISS HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. I vow and so do I. [*To him.*] You were observing, sir, that in this age of hypocrisy—something about hypocrisy, sir.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. In this age of hypocrisy, there are few who upon strict inquiry do not—a—a—a——

MISS HARDCASTLE. I understand you perfectly, sir.

MARLOW [*aside*]. Egad! and that's more than I do myself!

MISS HARDCASTLE. You mean that in this hypocritical age there are few that do not condemn in public what they practise in private, and think they pay every debt to virtue when they praise it.

MARLOW. True, madam; those who have most virtue in their mouths, have least of it in their bosoms. But I'm sure I tire you, madam.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Not in the least, sir; there's something so agreeable and spirited in your manner, such life and force —pray, sir, go on.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. I was saying—that there are some occasions—when a total want of courage, madam, destroys all the—and puts us—upon a—a—a——

MISS HARDCASTLE. I agree with you entirely, a want of courage upon some occasions assumes the appearance of ignorance, and betrays us when we most want to excel. I beg you'll proceed.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. Morally speaking, madam—But I see Miss Neville expecting us in the next room. I would not intrude for the world.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I protest, sir, I never was more agreeably entertained in all my life. Pray go on.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. I was—But she beckons us to join her. Madam, shall I do myself the honor to attend you?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Well then, I'll follow.

MARLOW [*aside*]. This pretty smooth dialogue has done for me. [*Exit.*

MISS HARDCASTLE. Ha! ha! ha! Was there ever such a sober sentimental interview? I'm certain he scarce looked in my face the whole time. Yet the fellow, but for his unaccountable bashfulness, is pretty well, too. He has good sense, but then so buried in his fears, that it fatigues one more than ignorance. If I could teach him a little confidence, it would be doing somebody that I know of a piece of service. But who is that somebody?—that, faith, is a question I can scarce answer. [*Exit.*

Enter Tony and Miss Neville, followed by Mrs. Hardcastle and Hastings.

TONY. What do you follow me for, cousin Con? I wonder you're not ashamed to be so very engaging.

MISS NEVILLE. I hope, cousin, one may speak to one's own relations, and not be to blame.

TONY. Ay, but I know what sort of a relation you want to make me, though; but it won't do. I tell you, cousin Con, it won't do, so I beg you'll keep your distance, I want no nearer relationship.

[*She follows him, coquetting, to the back scene.*

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Well! I vow, Mr. Hastings, you are very entertaining. There's nothing in the world I love to talk of so much as London, and the fashions, though I was never there myself.

HASTINGS. Never there! You amaze me! From your air and manner, I concluded you had been bred all your life either at Ranelagh, St. James's, or Tower Wharf.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. O! sir, you're only pleased to say so. We country persons can have no manner at all. I'm in love with the town, and that serves to raise me above some of our neighboring rustics; but who can have a manner, that has never seen the Pantheon, the Grotto Gardens, the Borough, and such places where the nobility chiefly resort? All I can do is to enjoy London at second-hand. I take care to know every *tête-à-tête* from the "Scandalous Magazine," and have all the fashions as they come out,

In a letter from the two Miss Rickets of Crooked Lane. Pray how do you like this head, Mr. Hastings?

HASTINGS. Extremely elegant and *degagée,* upon my word, madam. Your *friseur* is a Frenchman, I suppose?

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I protest, I dressed it myself from a print in the "Ladies' Memorandum-book" for the last year.

HASTINGS. Indeed! Such a head in a side-box, at the Play-house, would draw as many gazers as my Lady Mayoress at a City Ball.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I vow, since inoculation began, there is no such thing to be seen as a plain woman; so one must dress a little particular or one may escape in the crowd.

HASTINGS. But that can never be your case, madam, in any dress! [*Bowing.*

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Yet, what signifies my dressing when I have such a piece of antiquity by my side as Mr. Hardcastle: all I can say will never argue down a single button from his clothes. I have often wanted him to throw off his great flaxen wig, and where he was bald, to plaster it over like my Lord Pately, with powder.

HASTINGS. You are right, madam; for, as among the ladies there are none ugly, so among the men there are none old.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. But what do you think his answer was? Why, with his usual Gothic vivacity, he said I only wanted him to throw off his wig to convert it into a *tête* for my own wearing!

HASTINGS. Intolerable! At your age you may wear what you please, and it must become you.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Pray, Mr. Hastings, what do you take to be the most fashionable age about town?

HASTINGS. Some time ago forty was all the mode; but I'm told the ladies intend to bring up fifty for the ensuing winter.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Seriously? Then I shall be too young for the fashion!

HASTINGS. No lady begins now to put on jewels till she's past forty. For instance, Miss Neville there, in a polite circle, would be considered as a child, as a mere maker of samplers.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. And yet my niece thinks herself as much a woman, and is as fond of jewels as the oldest of us all.

HASTINGS. Your niece, is she? And that young gentleman, a brother of yours, I should presume?

MRS. HARDCASTLE. My son, sir. They are contracted to each other. Observe their little sports. They fall in and out ten times a day, as if they were man and wife already. [*To them.*] Well, Tony, child, what soft things are you saying to your Cousin Constance, this evening?

TONY. I have been saying no soft things; but that it's very hard to be followed about so. Ecod! I've not a place in the house now that's left to myself but the stable.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Never mind him, Con, my dear. He's in another story behind your back.

MISS NEVILLE. There's something generous in my cousin's manner. He falls out before faces, to be forgiven in private.

TONY. That's a d——d confounded—crack.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Ah! he's a sly one. Don't you think they're like each other about the mouth, Mr. Hastings? The Blenkinsop mouth to a T. They're of a size too. Back to back, my pretties, that Mr. Hastings may see you. Come, Tony.

TONY. You had as good not make me, I tell you.

[*Measuring.*

MISS NEVILLE. O lud! he has almost cracked my head.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. O, the monster! For shame, Tony. You a man, and behave so!

TONY. If I'm a man, let me have my fortin. Ecod! I'll not be made a fool of no longer.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Is this, ungrateful boy, all that I'm to get for the pains I have taken in your education? I that have rocked you in your cradle, and fed that pretty mouth with a spoon! Did not I work that waistcoat to make you genteel? Did not I prescribe for you every day, and weep while the receipt was operating?

TONY. Ecod! you had reason to weep, for you have been dosing me ever since I was born. I have gone through every receipt in the "Complete Housewife" ten times over; and you have thoughts of coursing me through "Quincy" next spring. But, ecod! I tell you, I'll not be made a fool of no longer.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Wasn't it all for your good, viper? Wasn't it all for your good?

TONY. I wish you'd let me and my good alone, then. Snubbing this way when I'm in spirits! If I'm to have any good, let it come of itself; not to keep dinging it, dinging it into one so.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. That's false; I never see you when you're in spirits. No, Tony, you then go to the ale-house or kennel. I'm never to be delighted with your agreeable, wild notes, unfeeling monster!

TONY. Ecod! Mamma, your own notes are the wildest of the two.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Was ever the like? But I see he wants to break my heart, I see he does.

HASTINGS. Dear Madam, permit me to lecture the young gentleman a little. I'm certain I can persuade him to his duty.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Well! I must retire. Come, Constance, my love. You see, Mr. Hastings, the wretchedness of my situation. Was ever poor woman so plagued with a dear, sweet, pretty, provoking, undutiful boy!

[*Exeunt Mrs. Hardcastle and Miss Neville.*

TONY [*singing*]. *There was a young man riding by, and fain would have his will. Rang do didlo dee.* Don't mind her. Let her cry. It's the comfort of her heart. I have seen her and sister cry over a book for an hour together, and they said, they liked the book the better the more it made them cry.

HASTINGS. Then you're no friend to the ladies, I find, my pretty young gentleman?

TONY. That's as I find 'um.

HASTINGS. Not to her of your mother's choosing, I dare answer! And yet she appears to me a pretty, well-tempered girl.

TONY. That's because you don't know her as well as I. Ecod! I know every inch about her; and there's not a more bitter cantankerous toad in all Christendom!

HASTINGS [*aside*]. Pretty encouragement, this, for a lover!

TONY. I have seen her since the height of that. [*Pointing to a low chair.*] She has as many tricks as a hare in a thicket, or a colt the first day's breaking.

HASTINGS. To me she appears sensible and silent!

TONY. Ay, before company. But when she's with her playmates she's as loud as a hog in a gate.

HASTINGS. But there is a meek modesty about her that charms me.

TONY. Yes, but curb her never so little, she kicks up, and you're flung in a ditch.

HASTINGS. Well, but you must allow her a little beauty. Yes, you must allow her some beauty.

TONY. Bandbox! She's all a made up thing, mun. Ah! could you but see Bet Bouncer of these parts, you might then talk of beauty. Ecod, she has two eyes as black as sloes, and cheeks as broad and red as a pulpit cushion. She'd make two of she.

[*Pointing in the direction of the door through which Miss Neville has just passed.*

HASTINGS. Well, what say you to a friend that would take this bitter bargain off your hands?

TONY. Anon.

HASTINGS. Would you thank him that would take Miss Neville, and leave you to happiness and your dear Betsy?

TONY. Ay; but where is there such a friend, for who would take her?

HASTINGS. I am he. If you but assist me, I'll engage to whip her off to France, and you shall never hear more of her.

TONY. Assist you! Ecod, I will, to the last drop of my blood. I'll clap a pair of horses to your chaise that shall trundle you off in a twinkling, and maybe get you a part of her fortin besides, in jewels, that you little dream of.

HASTINGS. My dear 'Squire, this looks like a lad of spirit.

TONY. Come along then, and you shall see more of my spirit before you have done with me. [*Singing.*

We are the boys
That fears no noise
Where the thundering cannons roar.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT THIRD

Scene—A Room in Hardcastle's House

Enter Hardcastle.

HARDCASTLE. What could my old friend Sir Charles mean by recommending his son as the modestest young man in town? To me he appears the most impudent piece of brass that ever spoke with a tongue. He has taken possession of the easy chair by the fireside already. He took off his boots in the parlor, and desired me to see them taken care of. I'm desirous to know how his impudence affects my daughter. She will certainly be shocked at it.

Enter Miss Hardcastle, plainly dressed.

HARDCASTLE. Well, my Kate, I see you have changed your dress as I bid you; and yet, I believe, there was no great occasion.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I find such a pleasure, sir, in obeying your commands, that I take care to observe them without ever debating their propriety.

HARDCASTLE. And yet, Kate, I sometimes give you some cause, particularly when I recommended my modest gentleman to you as a lover to-day.

MISS HARDCASTLE. You taught me to expect something extraordinary, and I find the original exceeds the description!

HARDCASTLE. I was never so surprised in my life! He has quite confounded all my faculties!

MISS HARDCASTLE. I never saw anything like it: And a man of the world, too!

HARDCASTLE. Ay, he learned it all abroad—what a fool was I, to think a young man could learn modesty by travelling! He might as soon learn wit at a masquerade.

MISS HARDCASTLE. It seems all natural to him.

HARDCASTLE. A good deal assisted by bad company and a French dancing-master.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Sure, you mistake, papa! a French danc-

ing-master could never have taught him that timid look —that awkward address—that bashful manner——

HARDCASTLE. Whose look? whose manner? child!

MISS HARDCASTLE. Mr. Marlow's: his *mauvaise honte,* his timidity struck me at the first sight.

HARDCASTLE. Then your first sight deceived you; for I think him one of the most brazen first sights that ever astonished my senses!

MISS HARDCASTLE. Sure, sir, you rally! I never saw any one so modest.

HARDCASTLE. And can you be serious! I never saw such a bouncing, swaggering puppy since I was born. Bully Dawson was but a fool to him.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Surprising! He met me with a respectful bow, a stammering voice, and a look fixed on the ground.

HARDCASTLE. He met me with a loud voice, a lordly air, and a familiarity that made my blood freeze again.

MISS HARDCASTLE. He treated me with diffidence and respect; censured the manners of the age; admired the prudence of girls that never laughed; tired me with apologies for being tiresome; then left the room with a bow, and, "Madam, I would not for the world detain you."

HARDCASTLE. He spoke to me as if he knew me all his life before. Asked twenty questions, and never waited for an answer. Interrupted my best remarks with some silly pun, and when I was in my best story of the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene, he asked if I had not a good hand at making punch. Yes, Kate, he asked your father if he was a maker of punch!

MISS HARDCASTLE. One of us must certainly be mistaken.

HARDCASTLE. If he be what he has shown himself, I'm determined he shall never have my consent.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And if he be the sullen thing I take him, he shall never have mine.

HARDCASTLE. In one thing then we are agreed—to reject him.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Yes. But upon conditions. For if you should find him less impudent, and I more presuming; if you find him more respectful, and I more importunate—I don't know—the fellow is well enough for a man—Certainly we don't meet many such at a horse race in the country.

HARDCASTLE. If we should find him so—But that's impossible. The first appearance has done my business. I'm seldom deceived in that.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And yet there may be many good qualities under that first appearance.

HARDCASTLE. Ay, when a girl finds a fellow's outside to her taste, she then sets about guessing the rest of his furniture. With her, a smooth face stands for good sense, and a genteel figure for every virtue.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I hope, sir, a conversation begun with a compliment to my good sense won't end with a sneer at my understanding?

HARDCASTLE. Pardon me, Kate. But if young Mr. Brazen can find the art of reconciling contradictions, he may please us both, perhaps.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And as one of us must be mistaken, what if we go to make further discoveries?

HARDCASTLE. Agreed. But depend on't, I'm in the right.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And depend on't I'm not much in the wrong. [*Exeunt.*

Enter Tony running in with a casket.

TONY. Ecod! I have got them. Here they are. My Cousin Con's necklaces, bobs and all. My mother shan't cheat the poor souls out of their fortin neither. O! my genus, is that you?

Enter Hastings.

HASTINGS. My dear friend, how have you managed with your mother? I hope you have amused her with pretending love for your cousin, and that you are willing to be reconciled at last? Our horses will be refreshed in a short time, and we shall soon be ready to set off.

TONY. And here's something to bear your charges by the way. [*Giving the casket.*] Your sweetheart's jewels. Keep them, and hang those, I say, that would rob you of one of them!

HASTINGS. But how have you procured them from your mother?

TONY. Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no fibs. I pro-

cured them by the rule of thumb. If I had not a key to every drawer in mother's bureau, how could I go to the ale-house so often as I do? An honest man may rob himself of his own at any time.

HASTINGS. Thousands do it every day. But to be plain with you; Miss Neville is endeavoring to procure them from her aunt this very instant. If she succeeds, it will be the most delicate way at least of obtaining them.

TONY. Well, keep them, till you know how it will be. But I know how it will be well enough, she'd as soon part with the only sound tooth in her head!

HASTINGS. But I dread the effects of her resentment, when she finds she has lost them.

TONY. Never you mind her resentment, leave *me* to manage that. I don't value her resentment the bounce of a cracker. Zounds! here they are! Morrice, Prance!

[*Exit Hastings.*

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Indeed, Constance, you amaze me. Such a girl as you want jewels! It will be time enough for jewels, my dear, twenty years hence, when your beauty begins to want repairs.

MISS NEVILLE. But what will repair beauty at forty, will certainly improve it at twenty, madam.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Yours, my dear, can admit of none. That natural blush is beyond a thousand ornaments. Besides, child, jewels are quite out at present. Don't you see half the ladies of our acquaintance, my lady Killdaylight, and Mrs. Crump, and the rest of them, carry their jewels to town, and bring nothing but paste and marcasites back?

MISS NEVILLE. But who knows, madam, but somebody that shall be nameless would like me best with all my little finery about me?

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Consult your glass, my dear, and then see, if with such a pair of eyes, you want any better sparklers. What do you think, Tony, my dear; does your cousin Con want any jewels, in your eyes, to set off her beauty?

TONY. That's as thereafter may be.

MISS NEVILLE. My dear aunt, if you knew how it would oblige me——

MRS. HARDCASTLE. A parcel of old-fashioned rose and table-

cut things. They would make you look like the court of king Solomon at a puppet-show. Besides, I believe I can't readily come at them. They may be missing, for aught I know to the contrary.

TONY [*apart to Mrs. Hardcastle*]. Then why don't you tell her so at once, as she's so longing for them? Tell her they're lost. It's the only way to quiet her. Say they're lost, and call me to bear witness.

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*apart to Tony*]. You know, my dear, I'm only keeping them for you. So if I say they're gone, you'll bear me witness, will you? He! he! he!

TONY. Never fear me. Ecod! I'll say I saw them taken out with my own eyes.

MISS NEVILLE. I desire them but for a day, madam. Just to be permitted to show them as relics, and then they may be locked up again.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. To be plain with you, my dear Constance, if I could find them, you should have them. They're missing, I assure you. Lost, for aught I know; but we must have patience wherever they are.

MISS NEVILLE. I'll not believe it; this is but a shallow pretence to deny me. I know they're too valuable to be so slightly kept, and as you are to answer for the loss.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Don't be alarmed, Constance. If they be lost, I must restore an equivalent. But my son knows they are missing, and not to be found.

TONY. That I can bear witness to. They are missing, and not to be found, I'll take my oath on't!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. You must learn resignation, my dear; for though we lose our fortune, yet we should not lose our patience. See me, how calm I am!

MISS NEVILLE. Ay, people are generally calm at the misfortunes of others.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Now I wonder a girl of your good sense should waste a thought upon such trumpery. We shall soon find them; and, in the meantime, you shall make use of my garnets till your jewels be found.

MISS NEVILLE. I detest garnets!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. The most becoming things in the world to set off a clear complexion. You have often seen how well they look upon me. You shall have them. [*Exit.*

MISS NEVILLE. I dislike them of all things. You shan't stir.—Was ever anything so provoking, to mislay my own jewels, and force me to wear her trumpery.

TONY. Don't be a fool. If she gives you the garnets, take what you can get. The jewels are your own already. I have stolen them out of her bureau, and she does not know it. Fly to your spark, he'll tell you more of the matter. Leave me to manage *her*.

MISS NEVILLE. My dear cousin!

TONY. Vanish. She's here, and has missed them already. Zounds! how she fidgets and spits about like a Catharine-wheel.

Enter Mrs. Hardcastle.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Confusion! thieves! robbers! We are cheated, plundered, broke open, undone!

TONY. What's the matter, what's the matter, mamma? I hope nothing has happened to any of the good family!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. We are robbed. My bureau has been broke open, the jewels taken out, and I'm undone!

TONY. Oh! is that all? Ha! ha! ha! By the laws, I never saw it better acted in my life. Ecod, I thought you was ruined in earnest, ha, ha, ha!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Why, boy, I am ruined in earnest. My bureau has been broke open, and all taken away.

TONY. Stick to that; ha, ha, ha! stick to that. I'll bear witness, you know, call me to bear witness.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I tell you, Tony, by all that's precious, the jewels are gone, and I shall be ruined forever.

TONY. Sure I know they're gone, and I am to say so.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. My dearest Tony, but hear me. They're gone, I say.

TONY. By the laws, mamma, you make me for to laugh, ha! ha! I know who took them well enough, ha! ha! ha!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Was there ever such a blockhead, that can't tell the difference between jest and earnest? I tell you I'm not in jest, booby!

TONY. That's right, that's right: You must be in a bitter passion, and then nobody will suspect either of us. I'll bear witness that they are gone.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Was there ever such a cross-grained brute, that won't hear me! Can you bear witness that you're no better than a fool? Was ever poor woman so beset with fools on one hand, and thieves on the other?

TONY. I can bear witness to that.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Bear witness again, you blockhead, you, and I'll turn you out of the room directly. My poor niece, what will become of her? Do you laugh, you unfeeling brute, as if you enjoyed my distress?

TONY. I can bear witness to that.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Do you insult me, monster? I'll teach you to vex your mother, I will!

TONY. I can bear witness to that.

[*He runs off, she follows him.*

Enter Miss Hardcastle and Maid.

MISS HARDCASTLE. What an unaccountable creature is that brother of mine, to send them to the house as an inn, ha! ha! I don't wonder at his impudence.

MAID. But what is more, madam, the young gentleman as you passed by in your present dress, asked me if you were the barmaid? He mistook you for the barmaid, madam!

MISS HARDCASTLE. Did he? Then as I live I'm resolved to keep up the delusion. Tell me, Pimple, how do you like my present dress? Don't you think I look something like Cherry in the "Beaux' Stratagem?"

MAID. It's the dress, madam, that every lady wears in the country, but when she visits or receives company.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And are you sure he does not remember my face or person?

MAID. Certain of it!

MISS HARDCASTLE. I vow, I thought so; for though we spoke for some time together, yet his fears were such, that he never once looked up during the interview. Indeed, if he had, my bonnet would have kept him from seeing me.

MAID. But what do you hope from keeping him in his mistake?

MISS HARDCASTLE. In the first place, I shall be *seen*, and that is no small advantage to a girl who brings her face to market. Then I shall perhaps make an acquaintance, and that's no

small victory gained over one who never addresses any but the wildest of her sex. But my chief aim is to take my gentleman off his guard, and like an invisible champion of romance examine the giant's force before I offer to combat.

MAID. But you are sure you can act your part, and disguise your voice, so that he may mistake that, as he has already mistaken your person?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Never fear me. I think I have got the true bar cant.—Did your honor call? Attend the Lion there.—Pipes and tobacco for the Angel.—The Lamb has been outrageous this half hour!

MAID. It will do, madam. But he's here. [*Exit Maid.*

Enter Marlow.

MARLOW. What a bawling in every part of the house! I have scarce a moment's repose. If I go to the best room, there I find my host and his story. If I fly to the gallery, there we have my hostess with her curtsey down to the ground. I have at last got a moment to myself, and now for recollection. [*Walks and muses.*

MISS HARDCASTLE. Did you call, sir? did your honor call?

MARLOW [*musing*]. As for Miss Hardcastle, she's too grave and sentimental for me.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Did your honor call?

[*She still places herself before him, he turning away.*

MARLOW. No, child! [*Musing*]. Besides, from the glimpse I had of her, I think she squints.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I'm sure, sir, I heard the bell ring.

MARLOW. No, no! [*Musing*]. I have pleased my father, however, by coming down, and I'll to-morrow please myself by returning. [*Taking out his tablets, and perusing.*

MISS HARDCASTLE. Perhaps the other gentleman called, sir?

MARLOW. I tell you, no.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I should be glad to know, sir. We have such a parcel of servants.

MARLOW. No, no, I tell you. [*Looks full in her face.*] Yes, child, I think I did call. I wanted—I wanted—I vow, child, you are vastly handsome!

MISS HARDCASTLE. O la, sir, you'll make one ashamed.

MARLOW. Never saw a more sprightly malicious eye. Yes, yes, my dear, I did call. Have you got any of your—a—what d'ye call it in the house?

MISS HARDCASTLE. No, sir, we have been out of that these ten days.

MARLOW. One may call in this house, I find to very little purpose. Suppose I should call for a taste, just by way of trial, of the nectar of your lips; perhaps I might be disappointed in that, too!

MISS HARDCASTLE. Nectar! nectar! that's a liquor there's no call for in these parts. French, I suppose. We keep no French wines here, sir.

MARLOW. Of true English growth, I assure you.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Then it's odd I should not know it. We brew all sorts of wines in this house, and I have lived here these eighteen years.

MARLOW. Eighteen years! Why, one would think, child, you kept the bar before you were born. How old are you?

MISS HARDCASTLE. O! sir, I must not tell my age. They say women and music should never be dated.

MARLOW. To guess at this distance, you can't be much above forty. [*Approaching.*] Yet nearer I don't think so much. [*Approaching.*] By coming close to some women they look younger still; but when we come very close indeed —[*Attempting to kiss her.*]

MISS HARDCASTLE. Pray, sir, keep your distance. One would think you wanted to know one's age as they do horses', by mark of mouth.

MARLOW. I protest, child, you use me extremely ill. If you keep me at this distance, how is it possible you and I can be ever acquainted?

MISS HARDCASTLE. And who wants to be acquainted with you? I want no such acquaintance, not I. I'm sure you did not treat Miss Hardcastle that was here awhile ago in this obstropalous manner. I'll warrant me, before her you looked dashed, and kept bowing to the ground, and talked, for all the world, as if you were before a justice of peace.

MARLOW [*aside*]. Egad! she has hit it, sure enough. [*To her.*] In awe of her, child? Ha! ha! ha! A mere awk-

ward, squinting thing, no, no! I find you don't know me. I laughed, and rallied her a little; but I was unwilling to be too severe. No, I could not be too severe, curse me!

MISS HARDCASTLE. O! then, sir, you are a favorite, I find, among the ladies?

MARLOW. Yes, my dear, a great favorite. And yet, hang me, I don't see what they find in me to follow. At the Ladies' Club in town I'm called their agreeable Rattle. Rattle, child, is not my real name, but one I'm known by. My name is Solomons. Mr. Solomons, my dear, at your service. [*Offering to salute her.*

MISS HARDCASTLE. Hold, sir; you were introducing me to your club, not to yourself. And you're so great a favorite there, you say?

MARLOW. Yes, my dear. There's Mrs. Mantrap, Lady Betty Blackleg, the Countess of Sligo, Mrs. Longhorns, old Miss Biddy Buckskin and your humble servant, keep up the spirit of the place.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Then it's a very merry place, I suppose.

MARLOW. Yes, as merry as cards, suppers, wine, and old women can make us.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And their agreeable Rattle, ha! ha! ha!

MARLOW [*aside*]. Egad! I don't quite like this chit. She looks knowing, methinks. You laugh, child!

MISS HARDCASTLE. I can't but laugh to think what time they all have for minding their work or their family.

MARLOW [*aside*]. All's well, she don't laugh at me. [*To her.*] Do you ever work, child?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Ay, sure. There's not a screen or a quilt in the whole house but what can bear witness to that.

MARLOW. Odso! Then you must show me your embroidery. I embroider and draw patterns myself a little. If you want a judge of your work you must apply to me.

[*Seizing her hand.*

MISS HARDCASTLE. Ay, but the colors don't look well by candle light. You shall see all in the morning. [*Struggling.*

MARLOW. And why not now, my angel? Such beauty fires beyond the power of resistance.—Pshaw! the father here! My old luck: I never nicked seven that I did not throw ames-ace three times following. [*Exit Marlow.*

Enter Hardcastle, who stands in surprise.

HARDCASTLE. So, madam! So I find *this* is your modest lover. This is your humble admirer that kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and only adored at humble distance. Kate, Kate, art thou not ashamed to deceive your father so?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Never trust me, dear papa, but he's still the modest man I first took him for, you'll be convinced of it as well as I.

HARDCASTLE. By the hand of my body, I believe his impudence is infectious! Didn't I see him seize your hand? Didn't I see him haul you about like a milkmaid? And now you talk of his respect and his modesty, forsooth!

MISS HARDCASTLE. But if I shortly convince you of his modesty, that he has only the faults that will pass off with time, and the virtues that will improve with age, I hope you'll forgive him.

HARDCASTLE. The girl would actually make one run mad! I tell you I'll not be convinced. I am convinced. He has scarcely been three hours in the house, and he has already encroached on all my prerogatives. You may like his impudence, and call it modesty. But my son-in-law, madam, must have very different qualifications.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Sir, I ask but this night to convince you.

HARDCASTLE. You shall not have half the time, for I have thoughts of turning him out this very hour.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Give me that hour then, and I hope to satisfy you.

HARDCASTLE. Well, an hour let it be then. But I'll have no trifling with your father. All fair and open, do you mind me?

MISS HARDCASTLE. I hope, sir, you have ever found that I considered your commands as my pride; for your kindness is such, that my duty as yet has been inclination.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT FOURTH

Scene—A Room in Hardcastle's House

Enter Hastings and Miss Neville.

HASTINGS. You surprise me! Sir Charles Marlow expected here this night? Where have you had your information?

MISS NEVILLE. You may depend upon it. I just saw his letter to Mr. Hardcastle, in which he tells him he intends setting out a few hours after his son.

HASTINGS. Then, my Constance, all must be completed before he arrives. He knows me; and should he find me here, would discover my name, and perhaps my designs, to the rest of the family.

MISS NEVILLE. The jewels, I hope, are safe.

HASTINGS. Yes, yes. I have sent them to Marlow, who keeps the keys of our baggage. In the meantime, I'll go to prepare matters for our elopement. I have had the 'Squire's promise of a fresh pair of horses; and, if I should not see him again, will write him further directions. [*Exit.*

MISS NEVILLE. Well! success attend you. In the meantime, I'll go amuse my aunt with the old pretence of a violent passion for my cousin. [*Exit.*

Enter Marlow, followed by a servant.

MARLOW. I wonder what Hastings could mean by sending me so valuable a thing as a casket to keep for him, when he knows the only place I have is the seat of a post-coach at an Inn-door. Have you deposited the casket with the landlady, as I ordered you? Have you put it into her own hands?

SERVANT. Yes, your honor.

MARLOW. She said she'd keep it safe, did she?

SERVANT. Yes, she said she'd keep it safe enough; she asked me how I came by it? and she said she had a great mind to make me give an account of myself. [*Exit servant.*

MARLOW. Ha! ha! ha! They're safe, however. What an

unaccountable set of beings have we got amongst! This little barmaid, though, runs in my head most strangely, and drives out the absurdities of all the rest of the family. She's mine, she must be mine, or I'm greatly mistaken!

Enter Hastings.

HASTINGS. Bless me! I quite forgot to tell her that I intended to prepare at the bottom of the garden. Marlow here, and in spirits too!

MARLOW. Give me joy, George! Crown me, shadow me with laurels! Well, George, after all, we modest fellows don't want for success among the women.

HASTINGS. Some women, you mean. But what success has your honor's modesty been crowned with now, that it grows so insolent upon us?

MARLOW. Didn't you see the tempting, brisk, lovely little thing that runs about the house with a bunch of keys to its girdle?

HASTINGS. Well! and what then?

MARLOW. She's mine, you rogue, you. Such fire, such motion, such eyes, such lips—but egad! she would not let me kiss them though.

HASTINGS. But are you sure, so very sure of her?

MARLOW. Why, man, she talked of showing me her work above-stairs, and I am to improve the pattern.

HASTINGS. But how can *you*, Charles, go about to rob a woman of her honor?

MARLOW. Pshaw! pshaw! we all know the honor of the barmaid of an inn. I don't intend to *rob* her; take my word for it, there's nothing in this house I shan't honestly *pay* for!

HASTINGS. I believe the girl has virtue.

MARLOW. And if she has, I should be the last man in the world that would attempt to corrupt it.

HASTINGS. You have taken care, I hope, of the casket I sent you to lock up? It's in safety?

MARLOW. Yes, yes. It's safe enough. I have taken care of it. But how could you think the seat of a post-coach at an Inn-door a place of safety? Ah! numbskull! I have taken better precautions for you than you did for yourself. I have——

HASTINGS. What?

MARLOW. I have sent it to the landlady to keep for you.

HASTINGS. To the landlady!

MARLOW. The landlady.

HASTINGS. You did!

MARLOW. I did. She's to be answerable for its forthcoming, you know.

HASTINGS. Yes, she'll bring it forth with a witness.

MARLOW. Wasn't it right? I believe you'll allow that I acted prudently upon this occasion?

HASTINGS [*aside*]. He must not see my uneasiness.

MARLOW. You seem a little disconcerted, though, methinks. Sure nothing has happened?

HASTINGS. No, nothing. Never was in better spirits in all my life. And so you left it with the landlady, who, no doubt, very readily undertook the charge?

MARLOW. Rather too readily. For she not only kept the casket, but, through her great precaution, was going to keep the messenger too. Ha! ha! ha!

HASTINGS. He! he! he! They're safe, however.

MARLOW. As a guinea in a miser's purse.

HASTINGS [*aside*]. So now all hopes of fortune are at an end, and we must set off without it. [*To him.*] Well, Charles, I'll leave you to your meditations on the pretty barmaid, and, he! he! he! may you be as successful for yourself as you have been for me. [*Exit.*

MARLOW. Thank ye, George! I ask no more. Ha! ha! ha!

Enter Hardcastle.

HARDCASTLE. I no longer know my own house. It's turned all topsy-turvy. His servants have got drunk already. I'll bear it no longer, and yet, from my respect for his father, I'll be calm. [*To him.*] Mr. Marlow, your servant. I'm your very humble servant. [*Bowing low.*

MARLOW. Sir, your humble servant. [*Aside.*] What's to be the wonder now?

HARDCASTLE. I believe, sir, you must be sensible, sir, that no man alive ought to be more welcome than your father's son, sir. I hope you think so?

MARLOW. I do, from my soul, sir. I don't want much entreaty. I generally make my father's son welcome wherever he goes.

HARDCASTLE. I believe you do, from my soul, sir. But though I say nothing to your own conduct, that of your servants is insufferable. Their manner of drinking is setting a very bad example in this house, I assure you.

MARLOW. I protest, my very good sir, that's no fault of mine. If they don't drink as they ought they are to blame. I ordered them not to spare the cellar, I did, I assure you. [*To the side scene.*] Here, let one of my servants come up. [*To him.*] My positive directions were, that as I did not drink myself, they should make up for my deficiencies below.

HARDCASTLE. Then they had your orders for what they do! I'm satisfied!

MARLOW. They had, I assure you. You shall hear from one of themselves.

Enter servant, drunk.

MARLOW. You, Jeremy! Come forward, sirrah! What were my orders? Were you not told to drink freely, and call for what you thought fit, for the good of the house?

HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. I begin to lose my patience.

JEREMY. Please your honor, liberty and Fleet Street forever! Though I'm but a servant, I'm as good as another man. I'll drink for no man before supper, sir, dammy! Good liquor will sit upon a good supper, but a good supper will not sit upon—hiccup—upon my conscience, sir.

MARLOW. You see, my old friend, the fellow is as drunk as he can possibly be. I don't know what you'd have more, unless you'd have the poor devil soused in a beer-barrel.

HARDCASTLE. Zounds! He'll drive me distracted if I contain myself any longer. Mr. Marlow. Sir! I have submitted to your insolence for more than four hours, and I see no likelihood of its coming to an end. I'm now resolved to be master here, sir, and I desire that you and your drunken pack may leave my house directly.

MARLOW. Leave your house!—Sure, you jest, my good friend! What, when I'm doing what I can to please you!

HARDCASTLE. I tell you, sir, you don't please me; so I desire you'll leave my house.

MARLOW. Sure, you cannot be serious! At this time of night, and such a night! You only mean to banter me!

HARDCASTLE. I tell you, sir, I'm serious; and, now that my passions are roused, I say this house is mine, sir—this house is mine, and I command you to leave it directly.

MARLOW. Ha! ha! ha! A puddle in a storm. I shan't stir a step, I assure you. [*In a serious tone.*] This your house, fellow! It's my house. This is my house. Mine, while I choose to stay. What right have you to bid me leave this house, sir? I never met with such impudence, curse me, never in my whole life before!

HARDCASTLE. Nor I, confound me if ever I did! To come to my house, to call for what he likes, to turn me out of my own chair, to insult the family, to order his servants to get drunk, and then to tell me, *This house is mine, sir.* By-all that's impudent, it makes me laugh. Ha! ha! ha! Pray, sir, [*bantering*], as you take the house, what think you of taking the furniture? There's a pair of silver candlesticks, and there's a fire-screen, and here's a pair of brazen-nosed bellows, perhaps you may take a fancy to them?

MARLOW. Bring me your bill, sir, bring me your bill, and let's make no more words about it.

HARDCASTLE. There are a set of prints, too. What think you of the "Rake's Progress" for your own apartment?

MARLOW. Bring me your bill, I say; and I'll leave you and your infernal house directly.

HARDCASTLE. Then there's a mahogany table, that you may see your own face in.

MARLOW. My bill, I say.

HARDCASTLE. I had forgot the great chair, for your own particular slumbers, after a hearty meal.

MARLOW. Zounds! bring me my bill, I say, and let's hear no more on't.

HARDCASTLE. Young man, young man, from your father's letter to me, I was taught to expect a well-bred modest man as a visitor here, but now I find him no better than a coxcomb and a bully; but he will be down here presently, and shall hear more of it. [*Exit.*

MARLOW. How's this? Sure, I have not mistaken the house? Everything looks like an inn. The servants cry "coming." The attendance is awkward; the barmaid, too, to attend us. But she's here, and will further inform me. Whither so fast, child? A word with you.

Enter Miss Hardcastle.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Let it be short, then. I'm in a hurry.—[*Aside.*] I believe he begins to find out his mistake, but it's too soon quite to undeceive him.

MARLOW. Pray, child, answer me one question. What are you, and what may your business in this house be?

MISS HARDCASTLE. A relation of the family, sir.

MARLOW. What? A poor relation?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Yes, sir. A poor relation appointed to keep the keys, and to see that the guests want nothing in my power to give them.

MARLOW. That is, you act as the barmaid of this inn.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Inn! O law!—What brought that in your head? One of the best families in the county keep an inn! Ha, ha, ha, old Mr. Hardcastle's house an inn!

MARLOW. Mr. Hardcastle's house! Is this house Mr. Hardcastle's house, child?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Ay, sure. Whose else should it be?

MARLOW. So, then all's out, and I have been damnably imposed on. O, confound my stupid head, I shall be laughed at over the whole town. I shall be stuck up in caricature in all the print-shops. The Dullissimo Macaroni! To mistake this house of all others for an inn, and my father's old friend for an inn-keeper! What a swaggering puppy must he take me for! What a silly puppy do I find myself! There again, may I be hanged, my dear, but I mistook you for the barmaid!

MISS HARDCASTLE. Dear me! dear me! I'm sure there's nothing in my behavior to put me upon a level with one of that stamp.

MARLOW. Nothing, my dear, nothing. But I was in for a list of blunders, and could not help making you a subscriber. My stupidity saw everything the wrong way. I mistook

your assiduity for assurance, and your simplicity for allurement. But it's over—this house I no more show my face in!

MISS HARDCASTLE. I hope, sir, I have done nothing to disoblige you. I'm sure I should be sorry to affront any gentleman who has been so polite, and said so many civil things to me. I'm sure I should be sorry [*pretending to cry*] if he left the family upon my account. I'm sure I should be sorry people said anything amiss, since I have no fortune but my character.

MARLOW [*aside*]. By heaven, she weeps. This is the first mark of tenderness I ever had from a modest woman, and it touches me. [*To her.*] Excuse me, my lovely girl, you are the only part of the family I leave with reluctance. But to be plain with you, the difference of our birth, fortune, and education, make an honorable connection impossible; and I can never harbor a thought of seducing simplicity that trusted in my honor, or bringing ruin upon one whose only fault was being too lovely.

MISS HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. Generous man! I now begin to admire him. [*To him.*] But I'm sure my family is as good as Miss Hardcastle's, and though I'm poor, that's no great misfortune to a contented mind, and, until this moment, I never thought that it was bad to want fortune.

MARLOW. And why now, my pretty simplicity?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Because it puts me at a distance from one, that if I had a thousand pound I would give it all to.

MARLOW [*aside*]. This simplicity bewitches me, so that if I stay I'm undone. I must make one bold effort, and leave her. [*To her.*] Your partiality in my favor, my dear, touches me most sensibly, and were I to live for myself alone, I could easily fix my choice. But I owe too much to the opinion of the world, too much to the authority of a father, so that—I can scarcely speak it—it affects me! Farewell! [*Exit.*

MISS HARDCASTLE. I never knew half his merit till now. He shall not go, if I have power or art to detain him. I'll still preserve the character in which I stooped to conquer, but will undeceive my papa, who, perhaps, may laugh him out of his resolution. [*Exit.*

Enter Tony and Miss Neville.

TONY. Ay, you may steal for yourselves the next time. I have done my duty. She has got the jewels again, that's a sure thing; but she believes it was all a mistake of the servants.

MISS NEVILLE. But, my dear cousin, sure, you won't forsake us in this distress. If she in the least suspects that I am going off, I shall certainly be locked up, or sent to my aunt Pedigree's, which is ten times worse.

TONY. To be sure, aunts of all kinds are d——d bad things. But what can I do? I have got you a pair of horses that will fly like Whistlejacket, and I'm sure you can't say but I have courted you nicely before her face. Here she comes, we must court a bit or two more, for fear she should suspect us. [*They retire, and seem to caress.*

Enter Mrs. Hardcastle.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Well, I was greatly fluttered, to be sure. But my son tells me it was all a mistake of the servants. I shan't be easy, however, till they are fairly married, and then let her keep her own fortune. But what do I see? Caressing one another, as I'm alive! I never saw Tony so sprightly before. Ah! have I caught you, my pretty doves? What, billing, exchanging stolen glances, and broken murmurs! Ah!

TONY. As for murmurs, mother, we grumble a little now and then, to be sure. But there's no love lost between us.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. A mere sprinkling, Tony, upon the flame, only to make it burn brighter.

MISS NEVILLE. Cousin Tony promises to give us more of his company at home. Indeed, he shan't leave us any more. It won't leave us, cousin Tony, will it?

TONY. O! it's a pretty creature. No, I'd sooner leave my horse in a pound, than leave you when you smile upon one so. Your laugh makes you so becoming.

MISS NEVILLE. Agreeable cousin! Who can help admiring that natural humor, that pleasant, broad, red, thoughtless [*patting his cheek*], ah! it's a bold face.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Pretty innocence!

TONY. I'm sure I always loved cousin Con's hazel eyes, and

her pretty long fingers, that she twists this way and that, over the harpsichord, like a parcel of bobbins.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Ah, he would charm the bird from the tree. I was never so happy before. My boy takes after his father, poor Mr. Lumpkin, exactly. The jewels, my dear Con, shall be yours incontinently. You shall have them. Isn't he a sweet boy, my dear? You shall be married to-morrow, and we'll put off the rest of his education, like Dr. Drowsy's sermons, to a fitter opportunity.

Enter Diggory.

DIGGORY. Where's the 'Squire? I have got a letter for your worship.

TONY. Give it to my mamma. She reads all my letters first.

DIGGORY. I had orders to deliver it into your own hands.

TONY. Who does it come from?

DIGGORY. Your worship mun ask that of the letter itself.

TONY. I could wish to know, though.

[*Taking the letter, and gazing on it.*

MISS NEVILLE [*aside*]. Undone, undone! A letter to him from Hastings. I know the hand. If my aunt sees it we are ruined forever. I'll keep her employed a little if I can. [*To Mrs. Hardcastle.*] But I have not told you, madam, of my cousin's smart answer just now to Mr. Marlow. We so laughed—you must know, madam—this way a little, for he must not hear us. [*They confer.*

TONY [*still gazing*]. A d——d cramp piece of penmanship, as ever I saw in my life. I can read your print-hand very well. But here there are such handles, and shanks, and dashes, that one can scarce tell the head from the tail. *To Anthony Lumpkin, Esquire.* It's very odd, I can read the outside of my letters, where my own name is, well enough. But when I come to open it, it's all—buzz. That's hard, very hard; for the inside of the letter is always the cream of the correspondence.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Ha! ha! ha! Very well, very well. And so my son was too hard for the philosopher!

MISS NEVILLE. Yes, madam; but you must hear the rest, madam. A little more this way, or he may hear us. You'll hear how he puzzled him again.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. He seems strangely puzzled now himself, methinks.

TONY [*still gazing*]. A d——d up and down hand, as if it was disguised in liquor. [*Reading.*] *Dear Sir.* Ay, that's that. Then there's an *M*, and a *T*, and an *S*, but whether the next be an *izzard* or an *R*, confound me, I cannot tell!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. What's that, my dear? Can I give you any assistance?

MISS NEVILLE. Pray, aunt, let me read it. Nobody reads a cramp hand better than I. [*Twitching the letter from him.*] Do you know who it is from?

TONY. Can't tell, except from Dick Ginger the feeder.

MISS NEVILLE. Ay, so it is. [*Pretending to read.*] "Dear 'Squire, Hoping that you're in health, as I am at this present. The gentlemen of the Shake-bag club has cut the gentlemen of Goose-green quite out of feather. The odds —um—odd battle—um—long fighting——" here, here, it's all about cocks, and fighting; it's of no consequence, here, put it up, put it up.

[*Thrusting the crumpled letter upon him.*

TONY. But I tell you, miss, it's of all the consequence in the world! I would not lose the rest of it for a guinea! Here, mother, do you make it out. Of no consequence!

[*Giving Mrs. Hardcastle the letter.*

MRS. HARDCASTLE. How's this? [*Reads.*] "Dear 'Squire, I'm now waiting for Miss Neville, with a post-chaise and pair, at the bottom of the garden, but I find my horses yet unable to perform the journey. I expect you'll assist us with a pair of fresh horses, as you promised. Despatch is necessary, as the *hag*" (ay, the hag) "your mother, will otherwise suspect us. Yours, Hastings." Grant me patience. I shall run distracted! My rage chokes me.

MISS NEVILLE. I hope, madam, you'll suspend your resentment for a few moments, and not impute to me any impertinence, or sinister design that belongs to another.

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*curtseying very low*]. Fine spoken, madam, you are most miraculously polite and engaging, and quite the very pink of courtesy and circumspection, madam. [*Changing her tone.*] And you, you great ill-

fashioned oaf, with scarce sense enough to keep your mouth shut! Were you too joined against me? But I'll defeat all your plots in a moment. As for you, madam, since you have got a pair of fresh horses ready, it would be cruel to disappoint them. So, if you please, instead of running away with your spark, prepare, this very moment, to run off with *me*. Your old aunt Pedigree will keep you secure, I'll warrant me. You too, sir, may mount your horse, and guard us upon the way. Here, Thomas, Roger, Diggory—I'll show you that I wish you better than you do yourselves. [*Exit.*

MISS NEVILLE. So now I'm completely ruined.

TONY. Ay, that's a sure thing.

MISS NEVILLE. What better could be expected from being connected with such a stupid fool, and after all the nods and signs I made him?

TONY. By the laws, miss, it was your own cleverness, and not my stupidity, that did your business. You were so nice and so busy with your Shake-bags and Goose-greens, that I thought you could never be making believe.

Enter Hastings.

HASTINGS. So, sir, I find by my servant, that you have shown my letter, and betrayed us. Was this well done, young gentleman?

TONY. Here's another. Ask miss there who betrayed you. Ecod, it was her doing, not mine.

Enter Marlow.

MARLOW. So I have been finely used here among you. Rendered contemptible, driven into ill manners, despised, insulted, laughed at!

TONY. Here's another. We shall have old Bedlam broke loose presently.

MISS NEVILLE. And there, sir, is the gentleman to whom we all owe every obligation.

MARLOW. What can I say to him, a mere boy, an idiot whose ignorance and age are a protection?

HASTINGS. A poor contemptible booby, that would but disgrace correction.

MISS NEVILLE. Yet with cunning and malice enough to make himself merry with all our embarrassments.

HASTINGS. An insensible cub.

MARLOW. Replete with tricks and mischief.

TONY. Baw! damme, but I'll fight you both one after the other—with baskets.

MARLOW. As for him, he's below resentment. But your conduct, Mr. Hastings, requires an explanation. You knew of my mistakes, yet would not undeceive me.

HASTINGS. Tortured as I am with my own disappointments, is this a time for explanations? It is not friendly, Mr. Marlow.

MARLOW. But, sir—

MISS NEVILLE. Mr. Marlow, we never kept on your mistake, till it was too late to undeceive you. Be pacified.

Enter servant.

SERVANT. My mistress desires you'll get ready immediately, madam. The horses are putting to. Your hat and things are in the next room. We are to go thirty miles before morning. [*Exit servant.*

MISS NEVILLE. Well, well; I'll come presently.

MARLOW [*to Hastings*]. Was it well done, sir, to assist in rendering me ridiculous? To hang me out for the scorn of all my acquaintance? Depend upon it, sir, I shall expect an explanation.

HASTINGS. Was it well done, sir, if you're upon that subject, to deliver what I entrusted to yourself, to the care of another, sir?

MISS NEVILLE. Mr. Hastings, Mr. Marlow. Why will you increase my distress by this groundless dispute? I implore, I entreat you——

Enter servant.

SERVANT. Your cloak, madam. My mistress is impatient.

MISS NEVILLE. I come. Pray be pacified. If I leave you thus, I shall die with apprehension!

Enter servant.

SERVANT. Your fan, muff, and gloves, madam. The horses are waiting.

MISS NEVILLE. O, Mr. Marlow! if you knew what a scene of constraint and ill-nature lies before me, I'm sure it would convert your resentment into pity.

MARLOW. I'm so distracted with a variety of passions, that I don't know what I do. Forgive me, madam. George, forgive me. You know my hasty temper, and should not exasperate it.

HASTINGS. The torture of my situation is my only excuse.

MISS NEVILLE. Well, my dear Hastings, if you have that esteem for me that I think, that I am sure you have, your constancy for three years will but increase the happiness of our future connection. If——

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*within*]. Miss Neville—Constance, why, Constance, I say!

MISS NEVILLE. I'm coming. Well, constancy. Remember, constancy is the word. [*Exit.*

HASTINGS. My heart! How can I support this? To be so near happiness, and such happiness!

MARLOW [*to Tony*]. You see now, young gentleman, the effects of your folly. What might be amusement to you, is here disappointment, and even distress.

TONY [*from a reverie*]. Ecod, I have hit it. It's here. Your hands. Yours and yours, my poor Sulky. My boots there, ho! Meet me two hours hence at the bottom of the garden; and if you don't find Tony Lumpkin a more good-natur'd fellow than you thought for, I'll give you leave to take my best horse, and Bet Bouncer into the bargain! Come along. My boots, ho! [*Exeunt.*

ACT FIFTH

Scene I.—A Room in Hardcastle's House

Enter Hastings and servant.

HASTINGS. You saw the old lady and Miss Neville drive off, you say?

SERVANT. Yes, your honor. They went off in a post-coach, and the young 'Squire went on horseback. They're miles off by this time.

HASTINGS. Then all my hopes are over.

SERVANT. Yes, sir. Old Sir Charles is arrived. He and the old gentleman of the house have been laughing at Mr. Marlow's mistake this half-hour. They are coming this way.

HASTINGS. Then I must not be seen. So now to my fruitless appointment at the bottom of the garden. This is about the time. [*Exit.*

Enter Sir Charles and Hardcastle.

HARDCASTLE. Ha! ha! ha! The peremptory tone in which he sent forth his sublime commands.

SIR CHARLES. And the reserve with which I suppose he treated all your advances.

HARDCASTLE. And yet he might have seen something in me above a common inn-keeper, too.

SIR CHARLES. Yes, Dick, but he mistook you for an uncommon inn-keeper, ha! ha! ha!

HARDCASTLE. Well, I'm in too good spirits to think of anything but joy. Yes, my dear friend, this union of our families will make our personal friendships hereditary: and though my daughter's fortune is small——

SIR CHARLES. Why, Dick, will you talk of fortune to *me?* My son is possessed of more than a competence already, and can want nothing but a good and virtuous girl to share his happiness and increase it. If they like each other, as you say they do——

HARDCASTLE. *If,* man! I tell you they *do* like each other. My daughter as good as told me so.

SIR CHARLES. But girls are apt to flatter themselves, you know.

HARDCASTLE. I saw him grasp her hand in the warmest manner myself; and here he comes to put you out of your *ifs,* I warrant him.

Enter Marlow.

MARLOW. I come, sir, once more, to ask pardon for my strange conduct. I can scarce reflect on my insolence without confusion.

HARDCASTLE. Tut, boy, a trifle. You take it too gravely. An

hour or two's laughing with my daughter will set all to rights again. She'll never like you the worse for it.

MARLOW. Sir, I shall be always proud of her approbation.

HARDCASTLE. Approbation is but a cold word, Mr. Marlow; if I am not deceived, you have something more than approbation thereabouts. You take me?

MARLOW. Really, sir, I have not that happiness.

HARDCASTLE. Come, boy, I'm an old fellow, and know what's what, as well as you that are younger. I know what has passed between you; but mum.

MARLOW. Sure, sir, nothing has passed between us but the most profound respect on my side, and the most distant reserve on hers. You don't think, sir, that my impudence has been passed upon all the rest of the family!

HARDCASTLE. Impudence! No, I don't say that—Not quite impudence—Though girls like to be played with, and rumpled a little too, sometimes. But she has told no tales, I assure you.

MARLOW. I never gave her the slightest cause.

HARDCASTLE. Well, well. I like modesty in its place well enough. But this is overacting, young gentleman. You *may* be open. Your father and I will like you the better for it.

MARLOW. May I die, if I ever——

HARDCASTLE. I tell you, she don't dislike you; and as I'm sure you like her——

MARLOW. Dear sir—I protest, sir——

HARDCASTLE. I see no reason why you should not be joined as fast as the parson can tie you.

MARLOW. But hear me, sir——

HARDCASTLE. Your father approves the match, I admire it, every moment's delay will be doing mischief, so——

MARLOW. But why won't you hear me? By all that's just and true, I never gave Miss Hardcastle the slightest mark of my attachment, or even the most distant hint to suspect me of affection. We had but one interview, and that was formal, modest, and uninteresting.

HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. This fellow's formal modest impudence is beyond bearing.

SIR CHARLES. And you never grasped her hand, or made any protestations!

MARLOW. As heaven is my witness, I came down in obedience to your commands. I saw the lady without emotion, and parted without reluctance. I hope you'll exact no further proofs of my duty, nor prevent me from leaving a house in which I suffer so many mortifications. [*Exit.*

SIR CHARLES. I'm astonished at the air of sincerity with which he parted.

HARDCASTLE. And I'm astonished at the deliberate intrepidity of his assurance.

SIR CHARLES. I dare pledge my life and honor upon his truth.

HARDCASTLE. Here comes my daughter, and I would stake my happiness upon her veracity.

Enter Miss Hardcastle.

HARDCASTLE. Kate, come hither, child. Answer us sincerely, and without reserve; has Mr. Marlow made you any professions of love and affection?

MISS HARDCASTLE. The question is very abrupt, sir! But since you require unreserved sincerity, I think he has.

HARDCASTLE [*to Sir Charles*]. You see.

SIR CHARLES. And pray, madam, have you and my son had more than one interview?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Yes, sir, several.

HARDCASTLE [*to Sir Charles*]. You see.

SIR CHARLES. But did he profess any attachment?

MISS HARDCASTLE. A lasting one.

SIR CHARLES. Did he talk of love?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Much, sir.

SIR CHARLES. Amazing! And all this formally?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Formally.

HARDCASTLE. Now, my friend, I hope you are satisfied.

SIR CHARLES. And how did he behave, madam?

MISS HARDCASTLE. As most professed admirers do. Said some civil things of my face, talked much of his want of merit, and the greatness of mine; mentioned his heart, gave a short tragedy speech, and ended with pretended rapture.

SIR CHARLES. Now I'm perfectly convinced, indeed. I know his conversation among women to be modest and submissive. This forward, canting, ranting manner by no means

describes him, and I am confident he never sat for the picture.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Then what, sir, if I should convince you to your face of my sincerity? If you and my papa, in about half an hour, will place yourselves behind that screen, you shall hear him declare his passion to me in person.

SIR CHARLES. Agreed. And if I find him what you describe, all my happiness in him must have an end. [*Exit.*

MISS HARDCASTLE. And if you don't find him what I describe— I fear my happiness must never have a beginning.

[*Exeunt.*

Scene II.—A Garden back of Hardcastle's House

Enter Hastings.

HASTINGS. What an idiot am I, to wait here for a fellow, who probably takes a delight in mortifying me! He never intended to be punctual, and I'll wait no longer. What do I see? It is he, and perhaps with news of my Constance.

Enter Tony, booted and spattered.

HASTINGS. My honest 'Squire! I now find you a man of your word. This looks like friendship.

TONY. Ay, I'm your friend, and the best friend you have in the world, if you knew but all. This riding by night, by-the-bye, is cursedly tiresome. It has shook me worse than the basket of a stage-coach.

HASTINGS. But how? Where did you leave your fellow-travellers? Are they in safety? Are they housed?

TONY. Five and twenty miles in two hours and a half is no such bad driving. The poor beasts have smoked for it: Rabbit me, but I'd rather ride forty miles after a fox, than ten with such *varmint.*

HASTINGS. Well, but where have you left the ladies? I die with impatience.

TONY. Left them? Why, where should I leave them, but where I found them?

HASTINGS. This is a riddle.

TONY. Riddle me this, then. What's that goes round the house, and round the house, and never touches the house?

HASTINGS. I'm still astray.

TONY. Why, that's it, mon. I have led them astray. By jingo, there's not a pond or slough within five miles of the place but they can tell the taste of.

HASTINGS. Ha, ha, ha, I understand; you took them in a round, while they supposed themselves going forward. And so you have at last brought them home again.

TONY. You shall hear. I first took them down Feather-bed lane, where we stuck fast in the mud. I then rattled them crack over the stones of Up-and-down Hill—I then introduced them to the gibbet on Heavy-tree Heath, and from that, with a circumbendibus, I fairly lodged them in the horse-pond at the bottom of the garden.

HASTINGS. But no accident, I hope?

TONY. No, no. Only mother is confoundedly frightened. She thinks herself forty miles off. She's sick of the journey, and the cattle can scarce crawl. So, if your own horses be ready, you may whip off with cousin, and I'll be bound that no soul here can budge a foot to follow you.

HASTINGS. My dear friend, how can I be grateful?

TONY. Ay, now it's dear friend, noble 'Squire. Just now, it was all idiot, cub, and run me through the vitals. D—n your way of fighting, I say. After we take a knock in this part of the country, we kiss and be friends. But if you had run me through, then I should be dead, and you might go kiss the hangman.

HASTINGS. The rebuke is just. But I must hasten to relieve Miss Neville; if you keep the old lady employed, I promise to take care of the young one. [*Exit Hastings.*

TONY. Never fear me. Here she comes. Vanish. She's got from the pond, and draggled up to the waist like a mermaid.

Enter Mrs. Hardcastle.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Oh, Tony, I'm killed—shook—battered to death! I shall never survive it! That last jolt that laid us against the quickset hedge has done my business.

TONY. Alack, mamma, it was all your own fault. You would be for running away by night, without knowing one inch of the way.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I wish we were at home again! I never met so many accidents in so short a journey. Drenched in the mud, over-turned in a ditch, stuck fast in a slough, jolted to a jelly, and at last to lose our way! Whereabouts do you think we are, Tony?

TONY. By my guess we should be upon Crackskull Common, about forty miles from home.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. O lud! O lud! the most notorious spot in all the country. We only want a robbery to make a complete night on't.

TONY. Don't be afraid, mamma, don't be afraid. Two of the five that kept here are hanged, and the other three may not find us. Don't be afraid. Is that a man that's galloping behind us? No; it's only a tree. Don't be afraid.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. The fright will certainly kill me.

TONY. Do you see anything like a black hat moving behind the thicket?

MRS. HARDCASTLE. O death!

TONY. No, it's only a cow. Don't be afraid, mamma, don't be afraid.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. As I'm alive, Tony, I see a man coming towards us. Ah! I'm sure on't. If he perceives us, we are undone.

TONY [*aside*]. Father-in-law, by all that's unlucky, come to take one of his night walks. [*To her.*] Ah, it's a highwayman, with pistols as long as my arm. A d——d ill-looking fellow.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Good heaven defend us! He approaches.

TONY. Do you hide yourself in that thicket, and leave me to manage him. If there be any danger I'll cough and cry hem. When I cough be sure to keep close.

[*Mrs. Hardcastle hides behind a tree in the back scene.*

Enter Hardcastle.

HARDCASTLE. I'm mistaken, or I heard voices of people in want of help. Oh, Tony, is that you? I did not expect you so soon back. Are your mother and her charge in safety?

TONY. Very safe, sir, at my aunt Pedigree's. Hem.

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*from behind*]. Ah! I find there's danger.

HARDCASTLE. Forty miles in three hours; sure, that's too much, my youngster.

TONY. Stout horses and willing minds make short journeys, as they say. Hem.

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*from behind*]. Sure he'll do the dear boy no harm.

HARDCASTLE. But I heard a voice here; I should be glad to know from whence it came.

TONY. It was I, sir, talking to myself, sir. I was saying that forty miles in four hours was very good going. Hem. Hem. As to be sure it was. Hem. I have got a sort of cold by being out in the air. We'll go in if you please. Hem.

HARDCASTLE. But if you talked to yourself, you did not answer yourself. I am certain I heard two voices, and am resolved [*raising his voice*] to find the other out.

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*from behind*]. Oh! he's coming to find me out. Oh!

TONY. What need you go, sir, if I tell you? Hem. I'll lay down my life for the truth—hem. I'll tell you all, sir.

[*Detaining him.*

HARDCASTLE. I tell you I will not be detained. I insist on seeing. It's in vain to expect I'll believe you.

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*running forward from behind*]. O lud, he'll murder my poor boy, my darling. Here, good gentleman, whet your rage upon me. Take my money, my life, but spare that young gentleman, spare my child, if you have any mercy.

HARDCASTLE. My wife! as I'm a Christian. From whence can she come, or what does she mean?

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*kneeling*]. Take compassion on us, good Mr. Highwayman. Take our money, our watches, all we have, but spare our lives. We will never bring you to justice, indeed we won't, good Mr. Highwayman.

HARDCASTLE. I believe the woman's out of her senses. What, Dorothy, don't you know *me?*

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Mr. Hardcastle, as I'm alive! My fears blinded me. But who, my dear, could have expected to meet you here, in this frightful place, so far from home? What has brought you to follow us?

HARDCASTLE. Sure, Dorothy, you have not lost your wits! So far from home, when you are within forty yards of your own door! [*To him.*] This is one of your old tricks, you graceless rogue, you! [*To her.*] Don't you know the gate, and the mulberry-tree; and don't you remember the horse-pond, my dear?

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Yes, I shall remember the horse-pond as long as I live; I have caught my death in it. [*To Tony.*] And is it to you, you graceless varlet, I owe all this? I'll teach you to abuse your mother, I will.

TONY. Ecod, mother, all the parish says you have spoiled me, and so you may take the fruits on't.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I'll spoil you, I will.

[*Follows him off the stage. Exit.*

HARDCASTLE. There's morality, however, in his reply. [*Exit.*

Enter Hastings and Miss Neville.

HASTINGS. My dear Constance, why will you deliberate thus? If we delay a moment, all is lost forever. Pluck up a little resolution, and we shall soon be out of the reach of her malignity.

MISS NEVILLE. I find it impossible. My spirits are so sunk with the agitations I have suffered, that I am unable to face any new danger. Two or three years' patience will at last crown us with happiness.

HASTINGS. Such a tedious delay is worse than inconstancy. Let us fly, my charmer. Let us date our happiness from this very moment. Perish fortune! Love and content will increase what we possess beyond a monarch's revenue. Let me prevail.

MISS NEVILLE. No, Mr. Hastings, no. Prudence once more comes to my relief, and I will obey its dictates. In the moment of passion, fortune may be despised, but it ever produces a lasting repentance. I'm resolved to apply to Mr. Hardcastle's compassion and justice for redress.

HASTINGS. But though he had the will, he has not the power to relieve you.

MISS NEVILLE. But he has influence, and upon that I am resolved to rely.

HASTINGS. I have no hopes. But since you persist, I must reluctantly obey you. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.—A Room in Hardcastle's House

Enter Sir Charles and Miss Hardcastle.

SIR CHARLES. What a situation am I in! If what you say appears, I shall then find a guilty son. If what he says be true, I shall then lose one that, of all others, I most wished for a daughter.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I am proud of your approbation; and, to show I merit it, if you place yourselves as I directed, you shall hear his explicit declaration. But he comes.

SIR CHARLES. I'll to your father, and keep him to the appointment. [*Exit Sir Charles.*

Enter Marlow.

MARLOW. Though prepared for setting out, I come once more to take leave, nor did I, till this moment, know the pain I feel in the separation.

MISS HARDCASTLE [*in her own natural manner*]. I believe these sufferings cannot be very great, sir, which you can so easily remove. A day or two longer, perhaps, might lessen your uneasiness, by showing the little value of what you think proper to regret.

MARLOW [*aside*]. This girl every moment improves upon me. [*To her.*] It must not be, madam. I have already trifled too long with my heart. My very pride begins to submit to my passion. The disparity of education and fortune, the anger of a parent, and the contempt of my equals, begin to lose their weight; and nothing can restore me to myself but this painful effort of resolution.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Then go, sir. I'll urge nothing more to detain you. Though my family be as good as hers you came down to visit, and my education, I hope, not inferior, what are these advantages without affluence? I must remain contented with the slight approbation of imputed merit; I must have only the mockery of your addresses, while all your serious aims are fixed on fortune.

Enter Hardcastle and Sir Charles from behind.

SIR CHARLES. Here, behind this screen.

HARDCASTLE. Ay, ay, make no noise. I'll engage my Kate covers him with confusion at last.

MARLOW. By heavens, madam, fortune was ever my smallest consideration. Your beauty at first caught my eye; for who could see that without emotion? But every moment that I converse with you, steals in some new grace, heightens the picture, and gives it stronger expression. What at first seemed rustic plainness, now appears refined simplicity. What seemed forward assurance, now strikes me as the result of courageous innocence, and conscious virtue.

SIR CHARLES. What can it mean? He amazes me!

HARDCASTLE. I told you how it would be. Hush!

MARLOW. I am now determined to stay, madam, and I have too good an opinion of my father's discernment, when he sees you, to doubt his approbation.

MISS HARDCASTLE. No, Mr. Marlow, I will not, cannot detain you. Do you think I could suffer a connection, in which there is the smallest room for repentance? Do you think I would take the mean advantage of a transient passion, to load you with confusion? Do you think I could ever relish that happiness, which was acquired by lessening yours?

MARLOW. By all that's good, I can have no happiness but what's in your power to grant me. Nor shall I ever feel repentance, but in not having seen your merits before. I will stay, even contrary to your wishes; and though you should persist to shun me, I will make my respectful assiduities atone for the levity of my past conduct.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Sir, I must entreat you'll desist. As our acquaintance began, so let it end, in indifference. I might have given an hour or two to levity; but, seriously, Mr. Marlow, do you think I could ever submit to a connection, where I must appear mercenary, and you imprudent? Do you think I could ever catch at the confident addresses of a secure admirer?

MARLOW [*kneeling*]. Does this look like security? Does this look like confidence? No, madam, every moment that

shows me your merit, only serves to increase my diffidence and confusion. Here let me continue——

SIR CHARLES. I can hold it no longer. Charles, Charles, how hast thou deceived me! Is this your indifference, your uninteresting conversation?

HARDCASTLE. Your cold contempt! your formal interview! What have you to say now?

MARLOW. That I'm all amazement! What can it mean?

HARDCASTLE. It means that you can say and unsay things at pleasure. That you can address a lady in private, and deny it in public; that you have one story for us, and another for my daughter!

MARLOW. Daughter!—this lady your daughter!

HARDCASTLE. Yes, sir, my only daughter. My Kate, whose else should she be?

MARLOW. Oh, the devil!

MISS HARDCASTLE. Yes, sir, that very identical tall squinting lady you were pleased to take me for. [*Curtseying.*] She that you addressed as the mild, modest, sentimental man of gravity, and the bold, forward, agreeable Rattle of the Ladies' Club: ha, ha, ha!

MARLOW. Zounds, there's no bearing this; it's worse than death!

MISS HARDCASTLE. In which of your characters, sir, will you give us leave to address you? As the faltering gentleman, with looks on the ground, that speaks just to be heard, and hates hypocrisy: or the loud confident creature, that keeps it up with Mrs. Mantrap, and old Miss Biddy Buckskin, till three in the morning; ha, ha, ha!

MARLOW. O, curse on my noisy head! I never attempted to be impudent yet, that I was not taken down. I must be gone.

HARDCASTLE. By the hand of my body, but you shall not. I see it was all a mistake, and I am rejoiced to find it. You shall not, sir, I tell you. I know she'll forgive you. Won't you forgive him, Kate? We'll all forgive you. Take courage man.

[*They retire, she tormenting him, to the back scene.*

Enter Mrs. Hardcastle and Tony.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. So, so, they're gone off. Let them go, I care not.

HARDCASTLE. Who gone?

MRS. HARDCASTLE. My dutiful niece and her gentleman, Mr. Hastings, from town—he who came down with our modest visitor, here.

SIR CHARLES. Who, my honest George Hastings? As worthy a fellow as lives, and the girl could not have made a more prudent choice.

HARDCASTLE. Then, by the hand of my body, I'm proud of the connection.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Well, if he has taken away the lady, he has not taken her fortune; that remains in this family to console us for her loss.

HARDCASTLE. Sure, Dorothy, you would not be so mercenary?

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Ay, that's my affair, not yours. But you know, if your son, when of age, refuses to marry his cousin, her whole fortune is then at her own disposal.

HARDCASTLE. Ay, but he's not of age, and she has not thought proper to wait for his refusal.

Enter Hastings and Miss Neville.

MRS. HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. What! returned so soon? I begin not to like it.

HASTINGS [*to Hardcastle*]. For my late attempt to fly off with your niece, let my present confusion be my punishment. We are now come back, to appeal from your justice to your humanity. By her father's consent, I first paid her my addresses, and our passions were first founded in duty.

MISS NEVILLE. Since his death, I have been obliged to stoop to dissimulation to avoid oppression. In an hour of levity, I was ready even to give up my fortune to secure my choice. But I'm now recovered from the delusion, and hope from your tenderness what is denied me from a nearer connection.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Pshaw, pshaw! this is all but the whining end of a modern novel.

HARDCASTLE. Be it what it will, I'm glad they're come back to reclaim their due. Come hither, Tony, boy. Do you refuse this lady's hand whom I now offer you?

TONY. What signifies my refusing? You know I can't refuse her till I'm of age, father.

HARDCASTLE. While I thought concealing your age, boy, was likely to conduce to your improvement, I concurred with your mother's desire to keep it secret. But since I find she turns it to a wrong use, I must now declare, you have been of age these three months.

TONY. Of age! Am I of age, father?

HARDCASTLE. Above three months.

TONY. Then you'll see the first use I'll make of my liberty. [*Taking Miss Neville's hand.*] Witness all men by these presents, that I, Anthony Lumpkin, Esquire, of BLANK place, refuse you, Constantia Neville, spinster, of no place at all, for my true and lawful wife. So Constance Neville may marry whom she pleases, and Tony Lumpkin is his own man again!

SIR CHARLES. O brave 'Squire!

HASTINGS. My worthy friend!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. My undutiful offspring!

MARLOW. Joy, my dear George, I give you joy, sincerely. And could I prevail upon my little tyrant here to be less arbitrary, I should be the happiest man alive, if you would return me the favor.

HASTINGS [*to Miss Hardcastle*]. Come, madam, you are now driven to the very last scene of all your contrivances. I know you like him, I'm sure he loves you, and you must and shall have him.

HARDCASTLE [*joining their hands*]. And I say so, too. And, Mr. Marlow, if she makes as good a wife as she has a daughter, I don't believe you'll ever repent your bargain. So now to supper, to-morrow we shall gather all the poor of the parish about us, and the Mistakes of the Night shall be crowned with a merry morning. So, boy, take her; and as you have been mistaken in the mistress, my wish is, that you may never be mistaken in the wife.

EPILOGUE

By Dr. Goldsmith

WELL, having stooped to conquer with success,
And gained a husband without aid from dress,
Still as a Barmaid, I could wish it too,
As I have conquered him, to conquer you:
And let me say, for all your resolution,
That pretty Barmaids have done execution.
Our life is all a play, composed to please,
"We have our exits and our entrances."
The first act shows the simple country maid,
Harmless and young, of everything afraid;
Blushes when hired, and with unmeaning action,
I hopes as how to give you satisfaction.
Her second act displays a livelier scene—
Th' unblushing Barmaid of a country inn.
Who whisks about the house, at market caters,
Talks loud, coquets the guests, and scolds the waiters.
Next the scene shifts to town, and there she soars,
The chop-house toast of ogling connoisseurs.
On 'Squires and Cits she there displays her arts,
And on the gridiron broils her lovers' hearts—
And as she smiles, her triumphs to complete,
Even Common Councilmen forget to eat.
The fourth act shows her wedded to the 'Squire,
And madam now begins to hold it higher;
Pretends to taste, at Operas cries *caro,*
And quits her *Nancy Dawson* for *Che Faro.*
Dotes upon dancing, and in all her pride
Swims round the room, the *Heinel* of Cheapside:
Ogles and leers with artificial skill,
Till, having lost in age the power to kill,
She sits all night at cards, and ogles at spadille.
Such, through our lives, the eventful history—
The fifth and last act still remains for me.
The Barmaid now for your protection prays
Turns female Barrister, and pleads for Bayes.

EPILOGUE

By J. Cradock, Esq.

WELL—now all's ended—and my comrades gone,
Pray what becomes of *mother's nonly son?*
A hopeful blade!—in town I'll fix my station,
And try to make a bluster in the nation.
As for my cousin Neville, I renounce her,
Off—in a crack—I'll carry big Bet Bouncer.
Why should not I in the great world appear?
I soon shall have a thousand pounds a year;
No matter what a man may here inherit,
In London—'gad, they've some regard for spirit.
I see the horses prancing up the streets,
And big Bet Bouncer bobs to all she meets;
Then hoikes to jiggs and pastimes ev'ry night—
Not to the plays—they say it a'n't polite,
To Sadler's-Wells perhaps, or Operas go,
And once by chance, to the roratorio.
Thus here and there, forever up and down,
We'll set the fashions too, to half the town;
And then at auctions—money ne'er regard,
Buy pictures like the great, ten pounds a yard:
Zounds, we shall make these London gentry say,
We know what's d——d genteel, as well as they.*

* To be spoken in the character of Tony Lumpkin.

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